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MATERIALISM
AND
CHRISTIANITY
CONTRASTED.

TYLER.



HAS MAN A FUTURE?



HAS MAN A FUTURE?

OR,

Materialism and Christianity Contrasted.

By J. TYLER.



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HAS MAN A FUTURE?

OR,

MATERIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY
CONTRASTED.

INTRODUCTION.

In all ages young men have at some period or periods of their lives been more or less troubled concerning the abode of the soul after death, and its condition in that abode. The utterly foolish and frivolous, have, perhaps, scarcely pondered one hour together on this all important matter, but the greater proportion of mankind has experienced many conflicting thoughts, and listened to many contradictory opinions and arguments relative to their future destiny, and many have, it is feared, eventually yielded to the *prima facie*

evidence which favours materialism. It is with a desire to elucidate the fallacy of a few of the apparent proofs of the worthlessness of christianity, that the following pages are written.

The young scientific student is very apt to become remarkably impressed with the grandeur of the universe, and the stupendous magnitude of the celestial bodies, and to feel that religion is a concoction of mythical ideas, and unfounded suppositions, suitable only to occupy the attention of those, who, from circumstantial inability, or intellectual weakness, are unable to engage themselves in scientific pursuits. Such a conclusion as this cannot afford him permanent satisfaction, for he cannot fail to see eventually that man is invariably but shortlived, and that the greatest uncertainty exists as to his attaining even an average age. So soon as these facts have awakened within him a spirit of inquiry concerning his existence hereafter, he finds himself beset with many difficulties; facts appear to clash with religious doctrines, and God in the world appears to be at variance with the God revealed in Scripture. Seeking an explanation of these things he reasons, he reads, and he converses. Should he unfortunately meet with men and literary works opposed to Christianity, the obstacles in his way are incalculably increased, for materialistic arguments, treating as they invariably do of the one

side only, are not generally easily defeated by the young enquirer.

The arguments of the opponents to Christianity are often sufficiently powerful to deceive even the diligent mind, but none should be satisfied with the consideration of the one view only, and it is of the utmost importance that all should fairly consider the arguments and evidence in favour of the Christian faith, as well as those relied upon by their opponents. The necessity for an unprejudiced consideration of all matters is obvious when it is remembered that in all things, both temporal and spiritual, man is enormously influenced by the arguments and facts brought before him by the advocates of either side, so much so indeed that his decision is frequently entirely reversed by the arguments which oppose the conclusion at which he primarily arrived.

There is a prevalent tendency among a certain class to assume that the questioning and investigation of religious doctrines and principles is not only unnecessary, but is hurtful to the progress of Christianity; they are of opinion that such investigation involves the individual in much difficulty and doubt, which would not be experienced were the faith of our forefathers accepted in sincerity of heart, leaving the unfortunate non-believer to enjoy his own opinion, in the full assurance that

his arguments are unassailable. That this supposition is erroneous will at once become apparent on due consideration of the matter.

The object in view when certain points concerning the Christian's faith are subjected to strict search and inquiry, is not to involve the Christian in difficulty, but to furnish him with well founded arguments, enabling him to effectually resist the encroachments continually made upon his religious convictions. This ability to meet his assailants with forceable reasoning the Christian finds is absolutely necessary, for the worldly man is ever on the alert, seeking some ground for ridicule, or some opportunity to revile, those whom he despises, and is usually competent to argue logically in favour of his own view. The Christian should make it his endeavour to save his deluded fellow man from eternal death, and this cannot be done unless the root of the evil be attacked, by overthrowing the props on which he leans, and destroying the basis of his belief. The utter absurdity of believing what has been handed down to us by tradition, without consideration, is seen in the fact that if the Mahommedan or the heathen youth were to resist all inquiry he would rely on what is void of truth. This then is the reason why all matters pertaining to the principles of our religion should be thoroughly studied.

We find in our daily experience that opposition

to religion is not confined to the thoughtless and ignorant, but is urged also by many who belong to the more cultured classes of society. Men whose everlasting happiness is imperilled, in consequence of wilful ignorance, assert with almost incredible boldness, that man was created only to enjoy his temporal existence—"Let us eat, drink, and be merry," say they, "for to-morrow we die." They state with surprising readiness that they fear no evil consequences of their non-belief, yet when questioned on matters relating to the spiritual, they are found to be totally ignorant of psychological arguments, and destitute of any basis on which to found their assertions. They are content to live on, hastening towards the goal which will terminate their earthly life, without ever seriously contemplating the future which awaits them. They entertain an extreme antagonism to any kind of preparation for the future, and pursue their career, intent only on gratifying their animal passions, and deriving what pleasure they can from unmitigated indulgence in the fleeting allurements of this transitory world.

As previously mentioned the ignorant and thoughtless are not the only opponents to Christianity, for the number of those who find gratification only in material things, and yet are highly intelligent, and decidedly thoughtful, forms by no means an insignificant minority. They contrast

strongly with the indifferent and careless, being especially careful to investigate fully every point which comes under their notice, and endeavouring to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. They would gladly renounce their objections to Christianity if they could rid themselves of the apparent evidence of the fallacy of its doctrines, which forces itself irresistibly upon them. They halt between two opinions, seeing much in favour of that which they reject, but considering it insufficient to counteract the antagonistic arguments and evidence. This latter class is principally composed of young inquirers, who have been unable to find in their own experience a satisfactory explanation of the objections which have occurred to their minds, and it is in the hope of affording assistance to any such whose eyes the following remarks may meet, that these pages are written.

The necessity for such a volume as the present is great, for the subjects here treated of are such as are frequently avoided by teachers and clergy of the present day. The spiritual teacher of the adult confines himself almost exclusively to the delivery to his audience of discourses, in which are contained various important truths, deduced from some short passage or verse of scripture, and which he intends should guide the righteous man on his Heavenly road, and inspire the backslider with an earnest desire to attain to the purity of

life from which he has fallen. This practical teaching is valuable and necessary, but it is totally inadequate to satisfy the doubting mind ; as well might one endeavour to build a house without having previously laid a foundation. With the younger members of society the case is very similar ; numerous scriptural facts are crammed into their minds by their spiritual preceptors, regardless of the fact that so soon as the youth commences to reason, he will find himself unprovided with any theological arguments to meet the materialistic ideas which steal across him, and consequently, in too many cases, the whole fabric falls, simply because it has no sound basis to support it.

It has been deemed expedient to consider all the principal objections which are raised to Christianity as they naturally occur to the young thinker, and as they are argued by the materialist, somewhat fully, giving the questions touched upon the most unprejudiced consideration. It is common to peruse a volume, or give audience to a discourse, relative to a matter to which the individual is opposed, with a bigoted mind. This is unfair and unwise, for he who considers that he is infallible, or that his judgment cannot err, will most assuredly lose much valuable knowledge which he might have possessed consequent upon consideration of the thought and study of others,

no one man being endued with wisdom and insight equal in bulk to that of the whole mass of mankind. Permit me then to ask those of my readers who are yet opposed to Christianity to remove from their minds every shadow of prejudice, and to give those opinions which they have hitherto rejected, their unbiassed attention.

The anxious inquirer will doubtless be enabled, with the assistance rendered in the following pages, to decide many points which may hitherto have disturbed his peace, and to confront his ready antagonist with arguments as conclusive as those upon which he himself relies.



SECTION I.

The Materialist.—The subject before us is one of vast magnitude, and immeasurable importance. It is one on which great philosophers in all ages have differed, and which has engaged the attention of the large proportion of the human race, to a greater or less extent, during the whole history of man. He who has serenely contemplated the matter, has always been the more confused as he has advanced in his research, until he has become convinced that religious doctrines cannot be reasonably established, while the simple minded have accepted a strange mixture of fact and fiction, simply from fear, or because others have held such opinions. The question for us to consider is, whether or not the views now generally held by the various sects of Christians, in relation to God, and His dealings with the human race, are consistent one with another, and whether or not they are conformable to existing facts, and the inferences drawn from surrounding circumstances. The field for discussion is wide,

and the space at our command limited ; we will, therefore, at once approach the subject in question.

The whole of existing things may be divided into two great classes ; the animate and the inanimate. Respecting the chemical constituents of which these two classes are composed, it is worthy of note that there is nothing in the organic which is not in the inorganic, although in the former the elements are found to be built up in much more complex combinations than in the latter. Of animate beings, man, from his intellectual superiority, is the chief, but as will now be shown, the difference between him and many of the lower order of creation is not so decided as is generally supposed.

Physiologically, man and the inferior creation are very nearly related, so much so that experiments have been, and are, much practised on the latter for the purpose of obtaining information as to the functions of the various organs in the human system, and for ascertaining the manner in which to treat diseases to which man is liable. That which gives a sense of uneasiness or pain to the one similarly affects the other ; they have the same propensities, and the same requirements must be complied with to render life easy and pleasant. Let us briefly trace the similarity between our own temporal life, and that of the

beast, from the commencement of that life to its end.

By the combination of certain generative elements, under favourable conditions, a body is formed, which in due time becomes possessed of life. When first admitted to the light of the world, this living organism, after having passed through exactly similar experiences in each case, is weak and dependent. The offspring is nourished and nurtured by its mother, and gradually acquires more strength and freedom of action as its age and size increase, whether it be a child, or the offspring of any member of the brute creation. Both are nourished by the same elements, either in the same, or in a somewhat different form and combination. They arrive at maturity, and are then possessed of their maximum strength and intellectual capacity, after which they begin to decline, and in the event of no accident or particular form of disease terminating their existence prematurely, we see the aged man and the aged beast alike gradually lose physical strength and agility, and power of perception, and finally yield themselves up to the universal destroyer—death.

It is held by all civilized men that the beast is mortal, or, in other words, that its physical death for ever terminates its existence. Now, if this be so in the case of the beast, it must be admitted

that we have strong analogical proof that the fact applies equally to the human race. If man is possessed of a soul distinct from his life and intellect—if an immortal spirit is the man, controlling the inclinations and the passions, whence does that immortal spirit originate, and when does it enter and leave the body—the material man ? It appears at once to be a ridiculous assumption, for man controls his inclinations and passions only to the same extent as the beast, and what ground can be found whereon to base such an assertion, when we see that life is taken, both in the case of the man and the brute in a precisely similar manner, that it is subject to the same laws and conditions, and that its disunion from the body is attended by precisely similar circumstances. This immense difficulty is at once obviated by the admission that all living beings are endowed with the life which they enjoy by an Almighty Creator for practical temporal purposes, during a limited and variable term, after which the physical organism decays and dies, and life becomes extinct.

It has been argued that man is intellectually superior to any other living creature, and is possessed of reasoning faculties, in which respect he stands alone. This is entirely erroneous, if taken as evidence of man's immortality, for he is intellectually superior to the beast only to the same extent that animals differ from one another in all

God's creation. The horse is infinitely more intelligent than the pig, and it may be seen that between the minute forms of animal life, and the fox, there is as wide a separation as between that animal, and the lord of creation. Not only can we observe a marked difference in the intellectual ability of various classes of animals, but in each particular class we can discover as much variation as in man. We have the intelligent and teachable animal, and the dull and stupid creature, in every variety of animal life. It is commonly believed that man reasons, while the inferior animal acts only from instinct, but the fact is that what is instinct in the one is also instinct in the other, although in the former of a higher grade. Who can deny that the inferior animal, and even the insect reasons, when we observe that the dog will bury its surplus food for a future time of need, that the fox exercises craft and cunning, equal to, or in excess of that exercised by man, and that the insignificant spider mends only that part of its web which is injured, whereas if it acted instinctively it would spin its web only at a certain time, and in an invariable manner. As a fact, the difference between man and the lower animals, is a difference of degree only, and not a specific difference, for are not the latter, like ourselves, possessed of memory, as well as reason; do they not quarrel in a similar way; are they

not liable to flattery, inflated with pride, and dejected by shame; and is not the care bestowed by them on their offspring as great as that bestowed by the human parent?

From the preceding, it must be admitted that if analogical proof is in any way admissible, the undoubted similarity between ourselves and the inferior classes of the animal creation, in every possible way, tends to show that there is no specific difference between us and them. The physical organism of every living creature originates in the same way, and becomes animate in a similarly mysterious manner, being composed of precisely the same elements. This organism, having served its allotted term, resolves itself into its primordial elements, and the creature is no more, the very components of the structure being reorganised to form some other being. All animate beings are subject to passions and desires, gratified at will, and in the same manner, and all are possessed of reason and intellect. In certain divisions of the animal kingdom, the reasoning faculties and powers of perception are weak in the extreme, and in man, the superior animal, they are found to be the most deep and comprehensive, while between these there exists every possible grade of variation.

The Christian.—In this section it is sought

to establish a foundation for materialistic views, from the fact that man, and the lower animals, are in many respects similar. It is undeniable that man, in common with other animate beings, is subject to pain, and susceptible of pleasure, and is physically sustained in the same manner from the air and the earth's produce. It is also admitted that man, like the beast, is born dependent and helpless, and, having reached mature age, gradually declines in strength and vigour, until death liberates him from a toilsome existence. But it must not be forgotten that these things refer only to the natural man, the tabernacle of clay, which, although in itself a truly wonderful creation, is far inferior to the spiritual part of man, and, as the one can be seen and felt, while the other is invisible and less easy to be understood, we must not be too ready to admit what is put before us as evidence, but must consider the question from all sides, and compare the one thing with the other in their entirety.

We are asked a question which no man can answer, when the materialist desires of us to know whence the immortal spirit originates, and when; but because we cannot know more than this, that the soul and all other things originates with an Almighty Creator, it is most absurd to suppose that therefore the soul does not exist. If we reasoned thus, we should not believe in the existence

of anything ; take the meanest object which we behold, and make the same inquiries respecting it, and it offers mysteries the most profound and insolvable ; yet none would dare to assert that because we are unable to trace it to its original source, and learn of it where it sprang from, and when it first existed in the world, there is therefore no such thing.

We are told that man controls his inclinations and passions only to the same extent as the beast, and that in each case they are subject to and controlled by the will, but this cannot be accepted as strictly correct. Where can he be found who would not object to be regarded as studying his character, his person, and his reputation no more than a beast ? The beast, like the man, is subject to certain requirements, but while the latter is a responsible being, the former has no knowledge of repute, and satisfies its necessities exactly as its nature prompts it, with no feeling of shame, and with the sole object of physical gratification.

Respecting man's intelligence, it is mere mountebank talk to say that between ourselves and the brute there is a difference of degree only. Animals are undoubtedly possessed of reason sufficient to enable them to provide for the necessities of life, and guard against danger ; some have even a knowledge of architecture, and can erect commodious little dwellings, just suited to

their own convenience, but how minute and inconsiderable are their mental powers when compared with our own. We see in the lower creation an endless variety of forms, and an inexhaustible number of ways are provided by which creatures maintain their existence. Some are, indeed, incomparably more intellectual than others, but, notwithstanding all this, man stands as an individual creature, immensely superior to, and widely separated from, any other organised being. He is endowed with power of perception, and skill, such as are approached by none outside the human family. The brute lives in continual fear, and carries itself in every way as an inferior, while man, as the lord of creation, appropriates the fruits of the earth, and the labour of the brute, to his own purposes. The inferior animal, with but a few exceptions, has no thought for the morrow, while we look forward to the future which awaits us, and prepare for the day of adversity. Man has noble aspirations, and earnest desires for promoting the welfare of himself, and those with whom he is connected; he is constantly inquiring into the cause of the remarkable phenomena presented to his view; he has the capability of communicating his ideas in definite, and almost unlimited language, and can compare signs with ideas, and thus express those ideas by means of written signs; he

anxiously inquires into things visible and invisible, not confining himself to the material, or to that which directly affects his immediate welfare ; he feels as much gratification in ministering to the wants of the mind, as he does in supplying the necessities of the body ; he observes the existing causes of discomfort and pain, and seeks to ascertain what is most effectual in alleviating them ; he collects the experience of those who have preceded him, and, adding this to his own, he turns it to practical account, thus lessening the toil and labour of his fellow men, and increasing the comforts of life. He possesses many faculties in common with the lower animals, and between him and them there is in many respects a remarkable similarity, but man is also possessed of that which is peculiar to him, faculties and qualities which can be traced in no other being, and the whole creation appears to be ordained expressly to meet his requirements. The likeness between the physical organism of man, and the brute, must not be too much urged, when man's immortality is the point at issue, for it refers exclusively to the natural man, and in no way refers to the spiritual.

The section which is under consideration, it must be admitted, is in the main, strictly true, and the arguments touched upon, if presented with rhetorical ability, may be made to convey strong

evidence that the view taken is correct; it is, nevertheless, but partially believed, even by those who apply it in favour of their own arguments, for every sane man is well aware that he is not a superior beast, but a being of high capability, and susceptible of moral culture, differing, in innumerable ways, from the creatures, among which, he would, in his heart, spurn to be classed.



SECTION II.

The Materialist.—The fallacy of the popular belief of this age, is exemplified on every deathbed, where the death occurs from natural causes. Let us suppose that we stand by the deathbed of an aged one, whose life is gradually ebbing away. Our reflections are not confined to the person before us in his present state, but we give a cursory glance at his infancy, and the period intervening between that time and the present. We observe that, as an infant, his intellectual powers were weak, relatively with his physical abilities, and that, immediately on his acquiring more physical strength, his mental capabilities expanded. And, as old age crept on, enfeebling the once active man, his power of perception, his capability to comprehend, and his faculty for retention, became less able, and less reliable. And finally, as the body dies, the mind becomes extinct ; watch the glassy eyes, and the pallid cheek ; feel the all but inactive pulse, and the stiffening hand, and compare them with the departing life, and the dying faculties ; just as the pulse becomes weaker, and the body stiffer and colder, so does the power

of comprehension become feebler, and the observation duller. How, I ask, can this matter be explained? If the soul be distinct from the body, if it be of divine origin, and if it proceed to an eternal destiny, why does it conform to the childish life, aye, and even lie almost dormant during the period of infancy? Why does it gradually decline as the natural man becomes feebler, if it be distinct from the body, if it be divine and everlasting? Can it be that the spiritual is subservient to the moral, the greater to the less, the motive power to the machinery? Such a belief is inconsistent with reason and, in opposition to the general order which prevail throughout the universe.

The Christian.—Man is mortal, and therefore all must die. It is a deathbed which we now have pictured before us. A solemn thing is death, to the old and young, to the rich and poor, to the infidel and christian. That man, who has, during many long years, walked this world of trouble and anxiety, who has cheered many in seasons of depression, and sported with many in their festivals, is now dying. He silently lays aside all care, and all pleasure, and appears to linger many long hours between life and death. That arm, which has so frequently proved itself to be strong as an iron band, lies cold and stiffening; that agile frame, formerly remarkable in

The error in supposing that the soul becomes feeble, inactive, and finally extinct, as the body is rendered indifferent to the external by death, arises from mistaking the intellect for the spirit of man. Our intellectual faculties are but organs, by which we hold communication with the outer world, and as these organs are mortal, forming a part of our temporal body, they decline in power as the body becomes feebler, eventually ceasing to perform their functions. The brain must not be regarded as the soul, but as the seat of the soul. The eye beholds a distant object through the telescope, but in the event of the telescope becoming impaired, so that the object is no longer visible to the eye, it cannot be said that the eye ceases to receive impressions. This, however, is just what the materialist asserts, when he says, that because external objects grow fainter, as the cerebral organs lose their power, therefore no soul exists.

It may at first sight appear strange that the soul can exist without a brain, or in other words, that a person can still live when those organs, by which only he has communicated with the external world, are dead. It must not be forgotten, however, that we can treat only of that which has form, size, weight, or colour; we, being mortal, cannot possibly, with our present limited capacity, understand of what the spirit consists. But to

understand how a soul can exist without a brain, and retaining life and power of perception, is no more difficult to understand, if carefully considered, than that it should exist with a brain. Nothing, indeed, can be understood by us; we are aware that certain causes will produce certain effects, and that an established law predominates over all, but beyond this limit we cannot penetrate, e.g., we know that a stone hurled into the air will descend to the earth, and we are told, in explanation, that it is an effect of the power of gravitation, or that power of attraction which the greater has over the less. This, however, is but a name for a cause; why a stone should not be stationary in the air, instead of being attracted to the earth, we cannot understand. That man should exist in any form is quite incomprehensible to the most acute intellect, and in meditating on the origin of anything, material or divine, we become involved in unexplainable mysteries. That the soul still lives after the decease of the body, in a manner concerning which we are ignorant, is but one of innumerable and insolvable mysteries, and it cannot therefore be urged in favour of materialism, that the soul does not exist as distinct from the body, because such an existence is inconceivable by us.



SECTION III.

The Materialist.—How grand, how infinite, how wonderful, is the universe. Every thoughtful person must at times be over-awed, by thinking of the marvellous expanse of worlds which surrounds us. Let us consider for a few moments these works of the Great Original.

In our own sphere, man is but a cipher, while our planet, extensive as it may appear to us, is but a speck in the vast extent of space. Around us are things visible, and completely beyond our control, while invisible agencies, stronger than the combined muscular force of the whole of the one thousand millions of beings who people the earth, are continually, and quietly, fulfilling their duties, unobserved, and unheard of, even in name, by the majority of the human race.

And even supposing this little planet, together with the mighty agencies referred to, were subservient to man, how insignificant would they be when compared with the celestial bodies, which appear to our vision as mere specks of light—but one millioneth part is it, in dimensions, compared with existing worlds. The most extended imagination of man, fails to comprehend the universe

in its entirety, although the researches of our astronomers have been instrumental in impressing us with a sense of its vastness and grandeur, which would not otherwise have been experienced. Science has determined, that the innumerable bodies forming the solar system, and comprising planets, asteroids, and satellites, form but one system of many; that all space is pervaded with countless myriads of worlds, and that this arrangement extends through all space. From the analogy of other planets to our own, in the influence exercised over them by the sun, and in their surroundings, and the general circumstances attendant upon their existence, it has been reasonably inferred that other planets are peopled, as is our own, either by intelligent beings, like ourselves, or by creatures of a somewhat similar nature.

If all this grandeur, and vast expanse of creation, be reasonably considered, can we believe that Almighty God has care for the individual man; it can scarcely be supposed, that he has especial regard for this world, a mere dot among the worlds, a mere grain of sand in a corner of the universe, much less that he has singled it out as the object of his especial care and attention. Astronomers, with their powerful telescopes directed to the starry sky, behold vastness inconceivable, and doubtless, when larger and more powerful glasses shall be applied, it will be found

that those worlds hitherto known, are but an unimportant few, when compared with the immense number then rendered visible. What then is this trifling ball called earth, that God should be mindful of it, and of its individual inhabitants. It is the smallest of a number so great that figures prove absolutely useless in dealing with them, and can we, as intelligent beings, endeavour to reduce Almighty God to such a low estate, as to believe him to be mindful of each human being who has lived, lives now, or is to live. As has been observed, the vast creation of the Almighty Originator, comprising the whole of the universe, stretches through all space : in this enormous expanse, a distance of millions of miles is but a span, and masses of matter, of stupendous bulk, constitute but specks in the vast arrangement. The God who called into existence these innumerable and immeasurable worlds, and who established the laws which govern them, is verily a God of Might, the One Omnipotent, the Great All, who is the sum total of being, and from whom all life emanates.

The Christian.—The grandeur of the universe is indeed sufficient to incite men to reverence their Maker, and to marvel at his wondrous power. His works are vast, and at the same time perfect. The vastness of God's work does not,

however, favour materialism ; for as the telescope presents to our view an unbounded creation of worlds, extending to the very verge of space, so the microscope discovers insects, so small that many millions of them would cover but a single inch. It finds vast numbers of them, in the cavities of a grain of sand, and in each drop of stagnant water, a world of animate beings, with as much room, in proportion to their size, as the whale in the ocean. By the aid of the microscope, we discover, on the wing of the butterfly, a down, so exact in its arrangement, that any human production is incomparable with it. Seeing then that God is so minute in his care for an insect, who can doubt his care for man, who is almost a God, when compared with the minute forms of animal life which the microscope reveals to us. It may be said, that, although all the wonderful creation, so minute, and yet so vast, is the work of Almighty God, he cannot, from their immense number, regard beings in their individual life and experiences, and that having created them, he bestows no further attention upon them. This is a plain perversion of the facts ; it should rather be argued, that, as God is Almighty, he is able to make each man the object of his especial care, although it may appear impossible to human understanding. The worlds which the Almighty has created, we are assured by our most eminent astronomers, last

but for a period, after which they are consumed by fire, and this, as the Bible declares, will be the end of the planet which we ourselves inhabit. Our bodies are, indeed, fearfully and wonderfully made, each organ performing its function in a manner which is incapable of explanation. It lasts, however, for a time only, finally resolving itself into the elements of which it was originally composed. Everything which we behold, however vast, however grand and beautiful, is of short duration. Man alone is immortal, and therefore stands first to merit the especial care of his Creator, he being most like God, from the fact that he alone, of all God's creation, is to live through all eternity.



SECTION IV.

The Materialist.—Overlooking all obstacles to the christian belief and doctrines, as held in our own day, let us now grant that God is mindful of his creatures, and that he entertains a decided concern for the welfare of each individual ; that the soul of man is immortal, and that the spiritual state is happy or unhappy, as determined by man's earthly life ; that the Bible is a revelation of God's will, and his dealings with men, and a guide for our race in all ages, and under all circumstances ; in short we will accept the christian doctrine *in toto*, and ascertain if it is consistent with known facts, and with reason.

There is a place, says the Christian called Heaven which is hereafter to be the abode of the righteous, an abode of unalloyed pleasure, where no discordant voices can sound, and in which everlasting felicity is to reign supreme ; the goal to which Christians hasten with eager joy, and where they are to find employment in praising God, and extolling his Almighty power, and wondrous love and compassion ; there, death is unknown, and all the various maladies and ailments which at present afflict the human race,

will be for ever forgotten. In direct opposition to this abode of unending felicity, the home of the righteous, is the place in which the future life of the unredeemed will be continued, amid suffering and pain indescribable, and without end, the result of their non-compliance with God's will and commandments during their earthly life. Before one can reasonably be expected to accept these statements, we must have some kind of evidence, either direct or indirect, that such regions really exist. This evidence we have only in the form of assertions, made by those who are content to believe, without questioning the basis of what they believe. We are naturally constrained to ask, If these places exist, where are they located! We must of course seek some points in space, under an entirely different arrangement to anything material, as their very nature necessitates their being, in every way distinct from organised matter. It cannot be that this planet, or any other or others of the known worlds, will be transformed into abodes for the righteous, or the wicked, after the end of time, as men of each class are daily dying, and have died daily, during many centuries, and as they must, at the present moment, have some sphere in which to move, it may be reasonably inferred that they now inhabit their everlasting abode. Where then are these abodes of felicity,

and of unspeakable misery? The answer of science, (the only source from which an answer of any kind can be obtained), is that the material arrangement pervades all space, and that there are therefore no such regions as heaven and hell.

The Christian.—The questions, where is heaven, and where is hell, none can satisfactorily answer, and any view which may be held on the subject, must of necessity, be mere conjecture. Holy scripture informs us that heaven will most certainly be the everlasting abode of the righteous, while the unforgiven will be doomed to great misery in hell, but as to where heaven and hell are, or will be, nothing definite can be gathered.

Many have supposed that this planet, when re-organised, will hereafter be the abode of the righteous, where they will live for ever in perfect happiness, in visible form, and constituted in all respects exactly as they now are. This doctrine is beset with many obstacles, and even if we admit it, the question still remains, Where is hell. And further, if we accept this view of our future destiny we must anticipate a material existence, not a purely spiritual, for if we are to inhabit this world hereafter, with the same bodies as we now possess, those bodies will require a means of subsistence, exactly similar to what is now requisite. We should therefore be again a striving,

toiling multitude, encountering once more all the trials of life, and finding ourselves subject to the same temptations and passions, and still liable to sin. Our orthodox friends will perhaps say, that it is quite possible for an Almighty God to so ordain it, that we shall live in the same way as now, and derive nourishment and support from earthly elements, and yet be free from sin ; but this being admitted we cannot overlook the fact that our bodies are purely temporal, and most certainly thoroughly liable to decay. But are not all things possible with God, and could he not, if he chose, preserve even these material bodies from the natural decline by age to which they are now subject, and protect them from the various maladies by which they are now afflicted ? Undoubtedly he could, but under such an arrangement a new state of things altogether would be brought about, and moreover, we should be constituted after all but for a strictly material life.

St. Paul tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and it therefore appears to be more in accordance with scripture, and with reason, to believe, that in the future life an entirely new organization will surround us, and that temporal things will be unknown. The spirit, freed from the mortal, will enjoy unlimited satisfaction, and rejoice in the presence of

our great Creator and Redeemer, perfectly released from all that would tend to mar our perfect bliss. In that much-to-be-longed-for time, no palpitating heart will rob us of our comfort, no concern as to our substance, and our future prospects, will harass our minds; no sun will scorch us by day, and no frost nip us by night; no parental anxieties will disturb the peace of mind, and no bereavements will cast a gloom over our life. These things are confined exclusively to this world, and can find no place in the pure abode of happiness, which redeemed souls anticipate.

Respecting the after state of such as reject our gracious God's proffered salvation, much might be said, but it would of necessity be purely imaginary. Scripture declares, that trouble and misery, unspeakable, await them, but nothing definite can be known with reference to the matter, more especially as we find that the terms used in the Bible, concerning this subject, are simply figurative, as "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth," "fire and brimstone," the "gulf," dividing the righteous and the wicked, and many others might be cited, if necessary. They are terms used respecting the spiritual, which really relate to the temporal, but serving to convey to the mind more vividly what is intended to be shown. These references to temporal things must not be accepted as proof that such things exist in the spiritual

world, but rather as symbolical of that which is meant to be expressed.

Those who have no hope of a future life, and who endeavour to prove the truth of their doctrines by difficulties, such as are here presented, conclude that no heaven or hell can exist, because we are ignorant of any point in space occupied by them respectively. True it is that scientists declare that the vast arrangement of Almighty God's creation fills all space, pervades all nature ; but can this be taken as conclusive that there is no heaven or hell ? By no means. Let any man endeavour to comprehend thoroughly those phrases, "pervades all nature," "fills all space," and it will be found that we cannot thoroughly realize their meaning, nor can the utmost stretch of our imagination conceive anything so vast. Man is adapted to the requirements of his earthly life, he is sufficiently gifted to enable him to grapple with the difficulties of his situation here, he has sufficient reason to deal with that with which he is intimately connected, but his capacity is limited, he is human, not divine. As then the imagination of man is baffled by that in which he believes, is it not likely that his reasoning capability is too limited to permit of his acknowledging, from reason alone, that that exists which he denies.

In order to conceive more clearly what is intended to be shown, let us imagine some tiny,

insignificant form of animal life, dwelling upon a small island, and surrounded by the wide ocean. These imaginary creatures, we will suppose, are gifted with reasoning capabilities, sufficient only for their immediate necessities, gaining knowledge from experience, and inferring from preceding events; also, that they are the rulers of the soil, in their little way, their right being disputed by none, and that they are divided into sections, each section holding its own opinions. These diminutive beings, shall be, to our imagination, like men and women of tiny dimensions, making observations concerning the various changes which occur to their little island country, and expressing their speculative theories, as to the boundless expanse which surrounds them, and that which lies beyond it. They use all available means to obtain knowledge of a definite character as to these matters, but, from the nature of their constitution and surroundings, they are compelled to rely solely on their arguments, as balanced one with the other. They would naturally differ much in opinion, and apparently, those who supported the theory that the barrier which enclosed them in on every side was literally unbounded, would be to some extent justified in holding to that theory, but it would, nevertheless, be incorrect.

Just as it is represented in this supposed case, so it is in fact with ourselves; the man who relies

on reason alone, and limits his reasoning to this one subject, cannot procure the least shadow of evidence that there is any abode for souls beyond the grave. As will be seen, in subsequent pages of this volume, we have evidence of a decided character, that the veracity of the Bible is undeniable, and, finding that reason is not always reliable, we fall back upon the repeated biblical assertions, that heaven and hell will, hereafter, be inhabited respectively by the good and the wicked.



SECTION V.

The Materialist.—The origin of the world, and of the human race, as explained in the Bible, is extremely concise. In the account given of the creation, in the opening chapters of the book, the world is represented as having existed in an unorganized form, prior to the days of Adam. "And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Next we are informed that the creation was commenced and finished in six days, each day being allotted to the origination of some one or more things, or to the introduction of some particular arrangement. The creation happened, according to Biblical chronology, about six thousand years ago. Science determines that the various changes, which our planet has undergone, have been wonderful and vast, contrasting strongly with the quick transition from chaos, to a state fit to support life, in one short week, as described in the first and second chapters of Genesis; and also, that six thousand years is but a short phase of its existence.

That the world was originally created by an Almighty God, the majority of scientists are prepared to admit, but their expositions are at variance

with Scripture in many respects. They are jointly of opinion that the earth was originally a heated mass of fluid, and that the granite, and other stones which form its natural basis, settled down while it remained in this heated fluid state. Next there appeared immense forests, and other vegetable growths, and still later, animals of various kinds, which are now entirely unknown, except in the fossil state. Continents existed which are now buried beneath the wave, and the highest mountains, at some very remote period, formed a portion of the ocean's bottom. The world has then arrived at its present state, after passing through a succession of vast periods; there has been a gradual change, from chaos to our own day, and no sudden transition such as is described in the Bible. First there existed bare earth, with a rocky basis, then traces of vegetable life, and later still, advanced vegetable life. Next appeared the lower forms of animal life; an upward and progressive tendency prevailed, and the higher forms of animal life came forward, and lastly man appeared on the scene. The various forces of the globe which we inhabit have co-operated, and have produced inanimate life; animate beings have sprung from the inanimate, and finally, man, as the most intelligent of beings, appropriates all things to his use. When these vast changes occurred cannot be determined, with any degree of accuracy,

but abundant is the evidence to prove, most conclusively, that man did not originate with Adam, six thousand years ago, but that he has inhabited this world during a much longer period than is commonly supposed, although, possibly, in very remote periods, he possessed no powers of speech, and was, in other ways, less widely separated from the brute creation than we now behold him.

The Christian.—A very great difficulty has been presented to the minds of numerous persons in reading the 1st chapter of Genesis, after having acquired a little knowledge of science, and taking this difficulty as their chief standpoint, they have doubted the truth of much of the Holy Scriptures. If read thoughtlessly, it does indeed appear to be much at variance with the facts brought to light by our modern men of fame, as they inform us, with certain proofs of the veracity of their statements, that the earth has existed during a much longer period than six thousand years. The 2nd verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, above quoted, does not mention, however, that it was six thousand, or six million years, from the present time, when the earth was “without form and void,” and if science can prove that the last mentioned time is more nearly correct than the former, the Scriptures contain nothing to contradict it; less difficulty is experienced, perhaps, in the first two

verses of the chapter in question, than in those which follow, where God's creation is stated to have occupied six days only ; while scientific authorities assert that it was during long ages that the earth was transformed from a gaseous, nebulous mass, to a fit abode for man. This apparent obstacle is easily overcome, when we remember that God does not compute time as we do. A thousand years, in his sight, are but as one day, and, very frequently, in the Pentateuch (which comprises the whole of the writings of the author of Genesis), as well as in other parts of the Bible, we discover that periods or times are spoken of as days, *e.g.*, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die ;" "Who answered me in the day of my distress ;" "Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them ;" "And I will surely hide my face in that day ;" "Call upon me in the day of trouble." When the eighth day is mentioned as being the day on which the rite of circumcision was to be observed, we know that one particular day is referred to, but in any case, other than those in which it is definitely specified, it may mean a period or time, of any date or duration. It is a fact, very worthy of notice, that the days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis exactly correspond with the periods which scientists of to-day generally consider to have elapsed prior to

man's appearance on earth. First chaos and darkness, followed by nebulous light; then a clearer period, when clouds would most probably have been visible to an observer; then a gradual separation of land and water, immediately followed by a vegetable growth upon the dry land; next the murky atmosphere brightens, and the sun, the rays of which had hitherto been unable to penetrate the misty air, now peers through, upon a world of mist and gloom; animal life then appears, in the shape of fowls and beasts; and lastly, man, gifted with life, and with power to govern; and bring all things into subjection, appears on the scene.

Many scientists raise an objection to the 1st chapter of Genesis, by their statements that man, whenever he appeared on earth, did not appear in a fully developed character, as Adam is there represented. This theory is rejected by perhaps the majority of our leading men of thought, and it cannot therefore be accepted as an objection to the Bible. The fossil remains of animal life, both birds and beasts, are frequently discovered, and from observations made upon them, evidence has been adduced of the fact that they were suited to a different atmosphere to that which now envelopes the earth, and belonged to families such as are now entirely extinct. There is no lineal series through creation, and the beings of the ages, so

long ago passed by, were not the ancestors of those now living. From this we may infer that the present forms of animal life are not the first by which this planet has been inhabited, and, that in the past ages, there lived creatures, suited to the world in its then condition, and they, being now extinct, have been succeeded by those which at the present time live in our midst.

From the fossil remains of animals, we have direct evidence concerning their existence in the pre-Adamite period, but no such evidence can be obtained respecting man. While vestiges of animals are numerous, conclusively proving that the now existing families are not the only ones that have inhabited this earth, nothing can be ascertained which would justify the belief that man has, at any time, differed from his present organisation. For this reason, the development theory that man has sprung from some lower form of animal life, is discovered to be unfounded. If he had, as has been alleged, become through many long ages increasingly intelligent, and possessed of more extended capabilities, we should have discovered traces of intermediate beings, but none such have ever been found.

If the development theory were correct, we should also find evidence in the fact that man possesses more faculties now than formerly. This, however, is not the case. The literary productions

of the ancients are held in the highest reputation, and form the principal subjects for classical study, even in our own day, and the ruins of ancient cities prove that their architecture and design have never since been equalled. Much progress has been made in science during recent years, but this has been the result of accidental discovery, rather than of man's increasing ingenuity, or advanced intellectual ability. In no species can any sign of a gradual modification be traced, and we are therefore justified in believing that the extinct species were as permanent in their form and character as those are which now inhabit the world, the former species being doubtless destroyed by some tremendous convulsion, prior to the institution of our race.

Both science and scripture then imply that with our own race man first appeared on earth; if, however, subsequent expositions of science can prove it to be otherwise, the Bible would be no obstacle to the acceptance of such a belief, as it deals only with the Adamite family, and in no way refers to any possible inhabitants of the world during any previous period.



SECTION VI.

The Materialist.—We will now turn from science, as it relates to our origin, and observe a few interesting points concerning man in his present state of existence. Man is a highly intelligent being, and is remarkably adapted for prehension, and for locomotion, possessing a wonderful control over the various members of his body, and over his body as a whole. Now although the intelligence, and physical capability of each man are similar, in a general sense, there is a considerable specific difference, in different individuals. Some men possess great physical power, and are able, in consequence, to set the ordinary man at defiance, and in precisely the same way are some men intellectually superior to others. How can we account for this variation? In the first case it can be explained by the fact that, in the physical man, there is a considerable variation in the size of the muscle, and the solidity of the bone, in different individuals, and, as the larger the muscle the greater the strength, it naturally follows that the man possessing extraordinarily firm and strong bones and muscles, capable of unusually great resistance, surpasses

in strength the ordinary man. This difference in capability is equally applicable to everything in man, as in the case of the eye, where the variation in the convexity of the anterior of the crystalline lens, produces ability to observe objects at a greater or less distance.

Intellectually men differ, perhaps, even more than physically. This difference may be explained by bearing in mind that, for every mental power man is endowed with a special faculty, that is to say, one faculty enables him to venerate, another prompts him to persevere, and encounter obstacles, another gives him power to connect signs with ideas, and so on. These faculties are as varied in different persons as are the bodily members, and as with the muscles the size usually rules the strength, so with the intellectual faculties the size of the organ regulates the intellectual capacity. Now it is clear to the least considerate, that he who is unfortunately possessed of weak or defective bodily members, should in no way be censured for such weakness or defect, as it is a matter entirely beyond his control. So with his mental faculties; as their weakness or strength cannot be regulated by himself, he is in no way to blame for deficiency, or undue influence, in respect of any one of them. Going yet a little further, we find that man is also morally affected by this variation, for, not only does he possess intellectual faculties controlling

his mental capacity, but he has also organs controlling the moral sentiments, and the animal propensities. The organ controlling the faculty of benevolence is one of these, and, as it is not completely controllable by man, we see that the benevolent are far less worthy of commendation than is generally supposed, for they are actuated by a remarkable development of this faculty ; and, on the other hand, those who are less mindful of the feelings and necessities of others should not be blamed, as their apparent failing is the consequence of an unavoidable weakness. Again, men who live chaste and consistent lives are respected, while the less chaste are accounted dishonourable ; the difference in these two classes of men should not be attributed to a voluntary chastity in the one case, and a wilful disregard for morality in the other, but rather to constitutions, in which the amative propensity is either all but inactive, or remarkably influential. Members of the two sexes are in many respects dissimilar. In women, we usually find a great attachment to home, a sincere love for one of the opposite sex, a wonderful esteem for their offsprings, (manifested in unremitting attention and untiring patience), and a natural verbosity, which is equalled by but few of the male sex. To them the great questions of philosophy, and the study of astronomy, geology, psychology, or metaphysics, are usually unworthy

of consideration ; so long as their present circumstances are such as afford them satisfaction, and comfort, they feel but little concern as to the origin of their race, and, almost unexceptionally, the inspection of that which is intended to clothe the external, is of more interest to our female friends than the study of their own physical organism, and a treatise on natural science would fail to please their minds, while the story of some fanciful adventurer, or undaunted suitor, would afford them considerable interest. These remarks are made with all due respect for the feminine sex, but that the fact is as stated none can deny. It is a wise arrangement of Almighty God, that the female should devote her time and attention to the domestic affairs of her home, whether wealthy and luxuriant, or poor and lowly ; woman is thoroughly practical, while man is, more or less theoretical. But how can this decided difference between man and his better half be explained ? Is it for the simple reason that a woman, because she is a woman, follows a woman's pursuits ? It is rather because, in the male head, the faculties of causality, comparison, and others, are larger, more developed, and exercise more influence, than in the female head, while in the latter, the organs of philoprogenitiveness, adhesiveness, inhabitiveness, and verbosity, are the more powerful.

It would be possible to dwell longer upon this

subject, showing more fully that man is not altogether a responsible being ; enough has been said, however, to prove that he does not regulate his life entirely at his option, but that he is really prompted to his actions, under whatever circumstances, by the weakness or strength of the faculties or propensities giving rise to action.

The Christian.—The objection raised to Christianity on phrenological grounds, is one very likely to lead men into erroneous suppositions and beliefs. That we are possessed of organs which, collectively, form the brain, each organ giving rise to particular sensations, and inciting to certain actions, is readily admitted, and that a remarkably developed propensity is generally a sign of its influence over the conduct, is very true. The error is in supposing that the various faculties of which we are possessed, are not under our control, and that therefore a man is naturally good, or naturally bad, just as he happens to be possessed of strong or weak propensities and faculties, and that he is, in short, unaccountable for his actions. The fact is that the material organs, which give rise to sensations and emotions, are under the control of the will, and consequently, although man may be more strongly tempted on one point than another, his actions are invariably, if he is sane, under his control. Doubtless, some

are naturally possessed of intellectual powers, superior by far to those of others, just as some are, physically, much stronger than others, but the strong man may become feeble by inactivity, and the weak may become strong by judicious exercise. This is also true of the cerebral organs. He who possesses natural talent, by wilful neglect of his opportunities, and by optionally choosing the path of recklessness, may become intellectually feeble, while he who is in no way fitted by nature to engage in high pursuits, may, by dint of hard labour, and unremitting application to study, soon surpass his naturally talented brother. It is a fact that the size of the organ denotes ability or inability, unless its influence is counteracted by the faculties of an opposite nature, e.g., the man whose organ of causality is greatly developed is more inquisitive, more anxious to enquire into reasons and theories, than the man who has no such development. In the individual where the propensity, known phrenologically as acquisitiveness, is large, there is a greater desire for accumulating wealth than in the ordinary man, although it is quite possible that he has so cultivated benevolent principles, that this latter faculty, from its greater influence, will somewhat deaden the acquisitive propensity, or limit its control. Thus we see that it is the mind which shapes the brain, and not the brain which

determines the mind. Man is entirely a responsible creature, in this differing most from the beast ; he is able to improve his native talent and become a great thinker, or, by neglecting to cultivate what is high and noble, he can, and does, fall almost to the level of the brute.

In considering this matter, extremes should be avoided. Man has been spoken of as simply a breathing and thinking machine, compelled to act by certain instincts which are innate and unalterable, while metaphysicians frequently speak of man as an immortal being, of supernatural powers, with a mind free, unbounded, unfettered, and illimitable, while it is, in reality, governed by certain laws, and capable of being overwrought from unequal and excessive exercises, rendering life unhappy, and its pleasures joyless.

Fatalism, then, is rebutted by the phrenologist, for he asserts that the body is influenced, by the mind, and not the mind by the body. Any who doubt this influence of the mind over the body can easily obtain proof of it by unprejudiced observations on their own habits and those of others. In the case of children, who generally act in accordance with natural promptings, we see that before they have been long able to decide between good and evil, and choose their own path in life, a remarkable change becomes apparent. The greedy child will, probably, mature as an example

of benevolence, and the inquiring child, after meeting with repeated hindrances to his acquirement of knowledge, as he approaches manhood, will probably, in consequence of this, and peculiarly untoward circumstances, entirely discard theoretical inquiries, and confine himself to the practical. Again, it may often be seen that the naturally intelligent man is positively ignorant on almost every topic, his own particular avocation excepted. He extends his energies in the direction from which he anticipates the most lucrative return, and in that direction only, whereas had he chosen to seek a varied knowledge, he would have been conversant on any subject brought before him.

Undoubtedly, between men and women a considerable difference can be traced, when considered in their intellectual relations the one to the other, but it is in a great measure attributable to the circumstances attending their lives. Men are most frequently employed in intellectual pursuits, while women are almost exclusively confined to domestic duties. In those cases where women have been exempt from family cares, and have been favoured with opportunities for culturing their minds, and extending their knowledge, if those opportunities have been embraced, a very considerable intellectual attainment has been the result; while men, who are secluded and con-

fined to the duties of a female, very nearly approach feminine habits, and are generally of a decidedly effeminate nature. We infer from these facts, that women are not what they are, because they can be nothing else, but because their situation in life makes them so in a large measure. There are, nevertheless, strongly marked natural characteristics in each sex, man having been ordained by an Almighty Creator to follow more arduous and difficult pursuits than the weaker sex, and constituted as capable of higher attainments and greater endurance, being furnished with a brain of larger dimensions for that purpose.

After perusal of the foregoing, it cannot be said that the science of phrenology affords argument in favour of materialism, that which is generally regarded as favouring materialistic views, being inferred from mistaking the principles of the science, and being in opposition to the views of phrenologists themselves. "It is frequently, but falsely, said," says Mr. Vago, "that the study of phrenology generates a disbelief in the immortality of the soul. There are certainly those who, to establish their principles of materialism, will say that they are justified in asserting that the mind or soul will decay and end with the brain, because phrenology proposes that the mind is strong or weak in proportion to the development of the

brain. But this is carrying the proposition to an improper length. The true phrenologist professes to know of the mental powers only in connection with the brain, and nothing of what the mind is, or is not, apart from the brain."



SECTION VII.

The Materialist. — If man is possessed of a soul, which is to live through all eternity, in a happy or unhappy state, to be determined by his life here on earth, what will be the future destiny of the idiot? He has a soul, but no reason, and is in no degree responsible for his actions, be they what they may. The Christian asserts that there is no intermediate place, that all must hereafter inhabit either the abode of the wicked, or of the redeemed, and that the man who commits sin is worthy of death, unless he obtains remission of his sins by penitent supplication for forgiveness through the Saviour. Is the idiot an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, or is he everlastingly damned? It cannot be that he is damned, for such a doctrine would be inconsistent with the Christian belief that God is merciful and loving, and would be incompatible with reason. Is he then to be accounted guiltless on account of his defective faculties? If so, then the Christian confirms what he pretends to deny, viz., that man is not a responsible being, and that he is saved or damned in consequence of circumstances beyond his control. By the admission of the guiltless-

ness of the idiot, it is also admitted that a man of ordinary intellect and ability, naturally virtuous and venerative, is saved from damnation, while he who by nature is disposed to immorality and sin, not possessing an innate inclination to uprightness and virtue, is damned. Thus we see that whether the Christian holds that the idiot is saved or damned, he plainly contradicts the principles of his faith.

The Christian.—As presented to the mind's eye, it appears that we have here an insurmountable difficulty, an obstacle which cannot be removed. It appears thus, only so long as we omit to consider man as a responsible creature, accountable for his works to his God, and to note the nature of our Judge. The Christian rejoices in his Maker as a God of mercy and love, "who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live," and of necessity refutes any supposition of the idiot being eternally damned.

The Bible teaches us that God punishes sin, and not that he punishes unavoidable ignorance, imbecility, or idiocy. Sin is a wilful, conscious proceeding, in opposition to God's known will, and, therefore, an idiot cannot be guilty of sin, and is not liable to incur God's displeasure. The ordinary man is guided by his reason, and does

not act involuntarily, as prompted by his natural inclinations. The sane man who acts in opposition to his Maker's will, is conscious of his error, and if at any time doubtful as to the propriety of an act, he appeals to his God, to his Bible, and to his reason, for guidance. The idiot has no sense of right and wrong in his relation to God; he fails even to comprehend that he should acknowledge God's supremacy, and is clearly guiltless in anything he may do. If, then, we conclude that the idiot is not doomed to everlasting punishment, the question naturally arises, What destiny awaits him? To go fully into this question would be to exceed the limits of this volume, but a few remarks as to what is meant by everlasting happiness, and by punishment for sin, may perhaps throw a little light on the subject.

Our life hereafter will, doubtless, be spiritual, and will therefore necessarily differ from anything which we can at present conceive. The righteous will be happy in the enjoyment of what can at most be but mythical to us, while bound by these fetters of clay, and the wilful rejectors of salvation will be decidedly unhappy. Now these states of happiness and misery will be the reward and punishment of men for their compliance or non-compliance with their Creator's will—their acceptance or rejection of his proffered salvation. As the idiot is in no way responsible

for his actions, this life is no trial of his loyalty to God, nor in any way proves whether he would wilfully reject salvation or no. He appears then as a neutral being, but, as scripture does not warrant a belief in an intermediate state, it would be an unfounded supposition to believe that the idiot will exist in such a state. Everlasting happiness was originally intended as an inheritance for man, and the consequence of sin, or of the rejection of salvation, offered through Christ to the world, must be borne by such as refuse to approach God through his Son. The idiot has not rejected salvation, and has in no way provoked God to wrath, and he therefore will, in all probability, retain the inheritance to which man was created, after being released from his bodily existence, the nature of which implies *nil conscribere sibi*.

Difficult as this question is, it does not in any way confirm the theory that we die as brutes, for an idiot must be regarded as distinct from the race of humanity, his imperfect faculties deterring him from taking his stand among intelligent and reasoning men. Even respecting worldly things he is treated as distinct and separate, and what is law for the sane man does not apply to the idiot. The opponent to Christianity argues that if the idiot is not liable to punishment for transgressing divine laws, on account of his

mental incapacity, therefore no man is judged except in consideration of his mental faculties, *i.e.*, the righteous man is accounted righteous, being necessarily so from his natural constitution, and the wicked man held blameless in consequence of a natural tendency to sin, and this amounts to no judgment at all, and an abolition of man's responsibility. That such an argument is a fallacy is shown in the fact that the sane man has the option of choosing between right and wrong, while the idiot has no option, and acts as prompted by his inclinations, being totally incapable of discerning between good and evil, the consequence being that the former is undoubtedly responsible for all he does, while the latter is in every respect guiltless.



SECTION VIII.

The Materialist claims as an argument in his favour, the fact that the ignorant or illiterate are not those who hold his opinions. Almost without exception such as are incapable of reasoning, or of deep thought, incline to religious beliefs, the reason being that they are frightened by the punishments which Christians declare will be visited upon them, in the event of their non-acceptance of their views, and their non-compliance with the rules laid down for their observance, or they are lured by the promise of reward held out to such as accept Christianity, and abide by its laws. The man of shrewd judgment and deep penetration, detects flaws which the less intelligent person would fail to observe, and the highly intelligent man refuses to believe what is obscure and unsatisfactorily explained, while his incapable neighbour is content to acknowledge the veracity of whatever is put before him, relying on his informants and supporters. It is very rare to meet with a materialist who is not a man of unusual intellectual capability ; he is, as a rule, a man of an inquiring mind, and one who prefers

to investigate all questions brought under his notice, and make them an object of deep consideration, rather than believe them unconditionally.

The Christian.—The assertion that the ignorant are but rarely found to be vigorous opponents to Christianity, is a truth which we are not prepared to deny, and which we have no wish to deny, inasmuch as it proves that an extensive knowledge is necessary, to enable a man to present his antagonistic theories to the mind in such a manner as to make them appear reasonable. It is also true that many of the ignorant and illiterate are firm adherents to the Christian doctrines, and this fact proves that even the ignorant Christian is able to find a basis whereon to ground his belief, and from which to derive satisfaction. This the ignorant materialist cannot do; he finds it absolutely requisite to be thoroughly familiar with many and varied subjects, and to draw from this and that some little inference in favour of his theory, to collect all these together, and present them to the world in a well considered manner, before his doctrines are in any degree accepted.

Although the majority of materialists are undoubtedly men of cultured intellect and considerable knowledge, it does not follow that the

majority of men possessed of intellectual ability are materialists. This is, indeed, far from being the case, and moderate observation and experience will speedily decide that materialists form but an insignificant minority, even in our own day. Christian doctrines are so widely spread, and so generally believed, that what is said concerning them, being simply incentives to a higher Christian life, and reminders of God's revealed law, and being void of novelty, are less noticeable than the isolated demonstrations of the fatalist, or the materialist. These latter are, by their fewness, rendered conspicuous, and the reputation of the demonstrator, although soon gained, is one which is extremely undesirable, it being such as only tends to expose the individual to ridicule, and make his name popular for a time, as one scarcely worthy of mention in refined society. Such a reputation as this is certainly far inferior to that to which our eminent divines are justly entitled, such as Dr. Watts, John Wesley, and Martin Luther. These, and numerous other names which might be mentioned, are conclusive in deciding that men of extraordinary ability have been, and still are, zealous workers in the Christian cause, and firm adherents to its doctrines. Such men as these do not simply create a sensation for a brief space of time, but by their unremitting exertions, and by the soundness of their arguments, they im-

mortalize their names, and attach honour to their memory.

Is it the ignorant who undertake all the vast responsibilities of national reform, by the agency of influential Christian societies, which are now more than ever abundant? Is it the ignorant and the illiterate who have erected all the churches which stud our country from Berwick-on-Tweed to Land's End? Are the majority of the ministers of the word of God men who are unconcerned as to the great question of immortality, and are the men who pass through the immense amount of training which is necessary to fit them to bear the Gospel to the heathen, unlettered and indifferent? Surely not; the declarants of God's free salvation, whether at home or abroad, are usually men of penetration and deep insight, men of considerable intellectual attainment, and decided principles. We cannot then admit that the materialistic doctrines are held by the majority of men of reliable judgment, and keen perception, as undeniable facts prove the reverse, and the Christian therefore claims the argument of the materialist as his own.



SECTION IX.

The Materialist.—If Christian doctrines be true, and if the views of those who support them are correct, it may reasonably be asked, why does God, an Almighty Sovereign, having knowledge of our infirmities, permit man's hope of future glory to rest on evidence so scanty as that furnished to him? Why does he not manifest himself to the world in such a manner that his will and purpose cannot be mistaken? Can it be that he who created all things, the Mighty One, who reigns supreme, he who, as Omnipotent and Omniscient, is not only able to do all things, but is able to perceive our every want and difficulty, can it be that he would allow such great objections to the acceptance of that which is expressive of his will, to stand as a barrier to those with whom such important results are at issue? Would it be a merciful God who would damn everlastingly many millions of immortal souls for refusing to believe what is but vague and indefinite?

And again, Christian doctrines are disputed by Christians themselves; how then can they be accepted as reliable and true. There can scarce

be found two leading divines who entirely agree, the one with the other, on all points, and a passage of Scripture submitted to ten men for explanation, would most probably have a different construction placed upon it by each one. Besides this, religious doctrines are incessantly changing, the belief of the father being rarely accepted by the son; in our own day the doctrines of the last generation are spoken of with scorn, and held to be ridiculous, and doubtless, our successors will renounce the opinions of to-day. How can it be that the revelation of God's will, and the whole fabric of the Christian belief, is thus changing and indefinite, if it be of divine origin?

The Christian.—It is urged against the truth of religion that an immense amount of doubt as to its reality checks the progress of the Gospel, and hinders both the well informed, and the ignorant, in accepting religious doctrines, and also that such doubts arise, not from a desire to oppose religion, but from solid and incontestable facts. It has been already seen that the difficulties which have been hitherto considered are capable of explanation, and the same result will follow in considering, in an impartial spirit, the further objections which are supposed to hinder the progress of the gospel.

It is worthy of note that religious theories are

not singular in being changeable, neither are they unique in being occasionally at variance one with the other. The case is exactly similar with scientific theories. It was once held by scientists that man originated from several centres, while in more recent times the belief has been in favour of a single origin. As to the age of the world, the most distinguished geologists have changed their views repeatedly. So great have been the changes in the opinions of our scientific men, that an authority of thirty years ago would most probably be no authority now. As new facts are discovered, new theories are made, and possibly, as the result of further observations, the close of the next twenty years will witness the publication of theories at present unheard of. Now, although these theories are incessantly being placed before us, and subsequently denied to admit others, man does not reject the respective sciences, but pursues his studies with increased energy. He knows that it would be utterly absurd to deny that any truth is revealed by science, because certain points are much disputed. As, then, man does not make the points at variance an obstacle to his acceptance of scientific truth, why should he, in consequence of variations in opinion, renounce religion. Christians dispute but unimportant questions, while on the chief points all are agreed, the belief of civilized

man concerning immortality having remained unchanged during thousands of years.

Such points as these being explained, it must be acknowledged that there is ample proof of the reality of religion. Man, unlike the beast, is possessed of a faculty for veneration, by which he is inclined to worship his Maker. Now, it would be absurd to suppose that God would in this case give a faculty for no purpose, while in every case beside, the given faculty has its external correspondent. It has been said that veneration is not innate, but arises from precept or example. We clearly see this to be false, however, when we remember that in distant lands, where religion had never been preached, and the name of God was unknown, the invariable report of explorers has been, that the inhabitants had some form of worship; precept and example may guide, but they cannot create feelings. Man, then, is a venerative creature by nature, and, as the faculty giving rise to veneration is natural and instinctive, so also is the unavoidable concern which we feel respecting our state after death. Man is unique in his conscious dependence on his Maker; the beast, it is true, owes its existence to the same God as we ourselves do, but it is not conscious of the fact. Man is a praying creature; in times of prosperity it is too often seen that man altogether ceases to recognise even the supremacy of his God,

but in times of extreme adversity, when no mortal aid is nigh, we see him, who during long years, perhaps, had neglected to approach his God in prayer, fall prostrate on his knees, and supplicate divine aid. Although we have strong proof of the reality of religion, it is rather a matter of experience than of theory, and all devout Christians can testify to its truth, even if arguments proved futile.

As, then, the objections to Christianity are not insurmountable, and as much can be said in its support from theory and from practical experience, and after fully considering the undoubted truths contained in God's revealed will, we have abundant authority to rebut the charge made by the materialist, that religion cannot be a reality, as if it were Almighty God would have revealed the fact more plainly to men.

To the unprejudiced mind, nothing of importance in religious matters is found to be difficult of explanation; the opponent, who seeks to ground his belief on argument, can present much to the mind which appears to confirm his own views, and which requires careful consideration. In doing this he, of course, collects all the facts which apparently substantiate the principles of his own belief, and by designed reasoning he can therefore raise many difficulties calculated to disconcert the unwary Christian. If both sides be

fairly considered, and fully inquired into, it will be found that arguments in favour of Christianity are varied and numerous, and are the more valuable from being founded on facts and experiences, which we can see, and prove for ourselves, while the materialist must be content to rely on argument alone, in many cases very shallow, and which, at best, is met by reasoning equally as forcible as his own.



SECTION X.

The Materialist.—The Christian belief is that all men are born in sin, and that salvation, although free to all, is granted only to such as sincerely repent of their past offences, and with a heartfelt gratitude accept the forgiveness offered to all penitents through the death of Christ; also that the unregenerated cannot see the kingdom of God. Now as the infant, or young child, has no understanding of repentance or forgiveness, it is clear that there can be in their case no voluntary acceptance of salvation, or penitence for sin. Therefore, if he dies in infancy or childhood, he is eternally damned; this is the doctrine of the Christian. Christians also believe that God is a merciful and loving Father, entertaining a sincere regard for the welfare of each one of his creatures. Is it, I ask, a merciful and loving Father, who would thus subject to everlasting torment, young children and infants, in consequence of the sin of their forefathers, while they themselves are in no way responsible, nor can be, for such sin.

In this country Christian knowledge is widely diffused, but in many populous countries of this

globe, that knowledge is not within the reach of the populace. Millions of men have lived and died, and have never heard the name of Jesus; are such admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, while the Divine Law directs that such as have not obtained remission of their sins cannot inherit eternal life, or are they consigned to never-ending tortures in consequence of unavoidable ignorance?

The Christian sees no difficulty in the question here brought before us, knowing that God does not punish for unconscious violation of his laws. It would indeed be incompatible with our view of God as a merciful and loving Father, to suppose that an innocent child, meeting its death before it can possibly have any knowledge of God or salvation, is to live through eternity in endless woe and misery. It may be asked what limit God has prescribed wherein to account man guiltless; this is a matter which we must leave in the hands of an Allwise Father; and, indeed, if we could possibly obtain an answer to the question, it would serve no useful purpose. The limit undoubtedly varies with individuals, extending in the case of the helplessly ignorant heathen over the entire life, as also in the case of the idiot.

There is a period in the life of all sane men, except with those who are so unfortunately circumstanced as to be unable to hear the Gospel

truths, when the question of everlasting life presents itself to the mind with irresistible force. Very frequently it is but slightly heeded, and the person, persisting in his indifference, dies, a wretched sinner, in the full knowledge that the most vital question of any that have from time to time presented themselves to him, has been neglected. Such a man is, according to the law of God, worthy of condemnation. It must not be supposed that he who wilfully disregards the voice of his conscience so long, that it ceases to warn him of his danger is held blameless, any more than when he acts in opposition to God's will, in consequence of his refusal to ascertain what that will is. The law of man not only holds him guilty who commits sin willingly and knowingly, but also such as do wrong in ignorance, when it might and should have been known to him what the law required; so, also, he who neglects to obtain the knowledge necessary for his guidance in religious matters, will, assuredly, be held guilty by the law of God for sins done in ignorance.

Salvation should not be regarded as a reward for a perfect compliance with various ordinances and religious rites and ceremonies, but rather as a reception of the sinner by God, in consideration of sincere penitence, and humble acceptation of the forgiveness offered him by the death of his

Saviour. He who, having come to years of discretion, wilfully rejects the proffered grace, and disregards his need of a Saviour, is verily worthy to suffer the penalty inflicted ; but he who, from any cause whatsoever, dies, never having had knowledge of his responsibility, is certainly, by the law of our gracious God, exempted from the punishment reserved for the wicked.



SECTION XI.

The Materialist.—All things are in the hands of God, by him were all things created, and by him are all things sustained. He can remove mountains, or control the mighty ocean. His power is infinite, and illimitable. He has existed from time unknown, and will exist through all eternity. He abhors sin and unrighteousness, and loves virtue and truth. Such are the attributes ascribed to Almighty God by the Christian of to-day. He also holds, that in opposition to God is an evil power, Satan, who exerts his loathsome influence over every individual born into the world. By this evil power man is drawn into sin, and by his strong hand is he kept in the paths of vice. Strong as this demon is, and great as is his influence over man, the Bible teaches that his power is far inferior to that of Almighty God. If this is so, why does God permit the devil to thus influence man for his harm, and eventual ruin? Why does he permit that his holy will and purpose should be prevented from due fulfilment, the matter resting entirely in His hands?

That the devil is a distinct person, a thinking and intelligent being, many deny, even among Christians. They thus endeavour to remove the difficulty here brought forward, but they can be but partially successful, for it must be acknowledged that misery exists, as undoubtedly as do cold and heat. The misery referred to, is not such as is the result of folly or inadvertence, but that to which man is unavoidably subject, and which is beyond his own control. All who have, at some time, been separated from a dear relative by death, are painfully conscious of the fact that the unspeakable agony of mind experienced under such circumstances, renders life almost intolerable. Accidents too, occur daily, filling the world with woe, and resulting from ignorance or unforeseen occurrences, which cannot be considered as strictly under human control. In ourselves we enjoy but brief periods of happiness ; we experience a craving for something higher and better, and an indefinable dissatisfaction is common to all classes. Our hopes end in disappointment, and our pleasures fall far short of our anticipations: How frequently it happens that hopes of great achievements have been fondly cherished, much labour, and energy have been expended to accomplish some much desired object, and finally, through sheer impossibility, the project has been abandoned. Even in those instances where the projected arrangements

have been carried out, and the lengthened endeavours crowned with success, how inconsiderable is the satisfaction afforded, when compared with the anticipation. Who has not looked back on some past event, the realization of which had been earnestly desired, and felt that it has resulted infinitely less satisfactorily than had been expected. Why then, if God is so watchful over his creatures, and so regardful of their welfare, does he permit this endless recurrence of vexation and disappointment, when he could, by a wish, ordain it otherwise ?

The Christian.—On reflection, we shall see that much of what is productive of evil, is so only in consequence of man's misapplication of what was intended to promote his happiness. Food is given us to supply our physical necessities, but very frequently from gluttony much evil results. Rest is extremely beneficial, being, in fact, absolutely essential to our well-being, but if allowed to amount to indulgence, habits of laziness are engendered, which are followed by a train of consequent evils. More of the misery which mars our happiness can be indirectly traced to injudicious acts, than is commonly supposed. Man is gifted with power to reason, and he could avert many troubles if he were sufficiently cautious. If a man is so careless and indifferent to his future well-being, as to do

acts which he knows will in all probability result unsatisfactorily, the blame attaches to him alone, for refusing to exercise the faculty with which he is provided.

We are told that exclusive of those things over which man has a partial, if not an absolute control, there are evils constantly befalling him, which could not be averted, by exercising the greatest possible amount of discretion and care. Of this fact we have no doubt, for dear as a mother or a wife is to the sensitive man, cruel death tears one, or perhaps both, from him; many accidents too, of daily occurrence, which inflict immense pain on the innocent, could by no reasoning or care have been avoided. As there are many things which originate pain and unhappiness, through a fixed law, so also is there much which in the same way contributes to the furtherance of our happiness, and it may be seen that that which affords happiness, and which operates for the good of mankind at large, is often the very thing which indirectly causes misery and pain. Man is adhesive by nature, clinging to his relatives and friends with a remarkable tenacity; this is certainly productive of happiness and comfort, for how monotonous and undesirable would this life be, if stripped of all that makes home dear, and binds families and friends together by a mutual bond of love and friendship. It is likewise a wise arrange-

ment that man is stationed here but for a time ; how dreary would our existence be, supposing we were aware that we were to continue, through eternity, as we now are, striving, grovelling mortals, bound by the chain of our own iniquities, with no hope of an eternal rest ; would it afford consolation to the reader to know that he was to fight the battle of life for, say, ten thousand years only ? No, it would not—man looks forward to an everlasting rest beyond the grave to which he is hastening. It is quite clear then, that upon the death of our dear ones, the operation of the very law which usually contributes to our happiness, is productive of the most extreme pain, for were we not bound to them by a natural affection, we should feel no anguish of mind at their laying aside the troubles of life. This explanation may be equally well applied to accidents, under whatever circumstances they may occur. By the law of gravitation the whole universe is controlled, and each planet and heavenly body, of whatever kind, is made to occupy its proper place in the boundless expanse of the universe. The sensibility of our bodies to feeling, is absolutely essential to our present existence, and accordingly, each member is abundantly supplied with the filaments of nerves, branching in every direction, and conveying impressions from the exterior to the centre of consciousness, the cerebral organ. A

body with such numerous functions, and of so complex a structure, is necessarily subject to easy disorganisation, and a severe blow or shock is likely to impair either an external organ, or the internal viscera. The same law which governs the whole universe, the law of gravitation, is, of course, as active in smaller matters as in regulating the course of the world in its path round the sun, and will, if nothing intercepts, attract a body which becomes dislodged from its resting place, to the earth, and should an unfortunate individual chance to be in the way, the susceptible and highly organised frame is thereby subjected to immense pain.

Whether a Satanic power exists in the form of an individual being, forms no subject for discussion here. The matter with which we have to deal is, why God should permit our happiness to be blighted by sorrow, when he by his Almighty power could have ordained it otherwise.

We are all aware that man is naturally prone to evil, and that there is much in the world which tends to mar human happiness. Now if man were not prone to evil, if he by nature inclined only to the good, where would be his responsibility. He would no longer be a responsible being, but simply a created organism, ordained to live for a certain time in the temporal state, in one unalterable manner, as a kind of animate machine.

Our Allwise Creator was so minded, that man should, in this respect, differ from every other part of his creation, having liberty accorded him of choosing between right and wrong. Can man reasonably demand to know why this should be so ; can he, the created, question the propriety of his Creator's will ? It is, indeed, monstrous to suppose that feeble man, with his limited mental powers, can demand to know why his Creator ordains this or that, or why he wills that we should be responsible creatures. Can man, a minute insect, here in a corner of the universe, be sufficiently preposterous to suppose that he could have better arranged this matter than he who has given the planets their movement, and has so wisely controlled that movement, that they, racing through the sky at the rate of thousands of miles each moment, never reach their goal a moment too late, or a moment too soon. Is God not wise in all he does concerning man, as well as in all beside ; he, who has created and arranged this mighty universe with so much minuteness and care that each part of his work fits into the other as do the cogs of wheels in machinery ; he who has described the orbit of each world, and given to it its exact weight, while a few handfuls of dust in the wrong place would produce the most alarming results, is he not mindful of man, his interests, and his welfare, and is he not more

competent to arrange the circumstances controlling his position here than insignificant man ? Would he, in his infinite wisdom, arrange all material things with the most scrupulous exactness, while man, the only part of his creation claiming immortality, and a likeness to his Maker, has been neglected ? Assuredly not. His wisdom surpasses all human wisdom, and we, his handiwork, will be content to leave all things in his hands.



SECTION XII.

The Materialist.—The Christian takes as his guide and text-book a certain ancient work called the Bible, which is generally believed to be an inspired work, making known to man the mind of Almighty God. The Bible, then is naturally expected to be indeed the Book of Books, correct to the letter, and unquestionably true, and superior to any other volume extant, now or at any time, past, or to come. On examination, however, it will be found that the Bible is not a literary production of unquestionable superiority; many statements therein contained are at variance with the facts which science reveals to us, and there are discordances in various parts of the volume which are of considerable importance; exception may also reasonably be taken to several passages on the ground that reference is made to subjects calculated to deprave the mind and increase immorality. The principal statements at variance, with the revelations of science have already been touched upon, and we will therefore at once proceed to notice a few passages which

are in contradiction the one to the other. In Gal. ii, 16, we read, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified;" and in James ii, 24, we read, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." On perusing the chapters from which these two verses are taken it will be at once seen that in the one it is urged upon those to whom the epistle was written that man is not justified by works but by faith, while in the other the writer states that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone," that "faith, without works, is dead," and that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

The narratives of the miracles performed by Christ are somewhat dissimilar in numerous cases. In St. Matthew viii, 28-34, will be found the description of a miracle performed by Christ in ejecting devils from two men, while in St. Mark v, 1-20, and in St. Luke viii, 26-40, where the same miracle is recorded, but one man is mentioned. In Proverbs xxiii, 31, we find a decided condemnation of strong drinks: "Look not upon the wine when it is red," says Solomon. He does not simply say, Do not yield to the tempta-

tion to indulge in strong drinks to excess, but he says, Do not look upon it, have no dealing with it whatever, regard it as a great enemy to the human race. In direct contradiction to this injunction of the wisest writer of the Old Testament scriptures, the most able writer and preacher of the Gospel, in the New Testament, in his 1st epistle to Tim., advises him, in the 23rd verse of the 5th chapter, "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake." These, and numerous other passages, plainly prove that in the Bible that perfect unity does not exist which, from its nature, one would expect to find.

Nor is this contradiction of the Bible by itself all of which complaint is made. In various parts are narratives of, and references to subjects, which cannot be held to be of a moral character. It is unnecessary, and perhaps it would be unwise, to give quotations to illustrate what is here referred to, as the passages in question are generally well known.

How can it be explained, that a volume, so incalculably important, and so inestimably valuable as a guide for the Christian, to enable him to maintain virtue, and suppress vice, should contain statements so contradictory in their nature, and also, passages which, in these days, if appearing in any ordinary publication, would be condemned as hurtful to the public morals.

The Christian.—The Bible is indeed the Book of Books, standing alone as superior to any book known to man, now, or in any bygone times. It is the main guide of the Christian in the world, sanctioning him when he does right, and warning him when tempted to do wrong. The Old Testament points to what was to come, and the New Testament confirms the Old. This book, unlike any other, has braved all persecution, and is, in our own day, more widely known in the civilized world than any other volume. It makes assertions with authority, such as are nowhere else made, and which are of so unusual and startling a character as to arouse a spirit of inquiry in all who read it. It presents to the world a series of unquestionable facts, and gives the Christian a firm foundation whereon to build his faith.

Those who reject the Bible, do so generally, on the ground that there is so much discordance in the volume, that it cannot be true. There is much which appears to be somewhat contradictory, but there is nothing of importance which is not capable of explanation. With reference to the passages above quoted, concerning justification by faith, and by works, it should be observed that they are taken from the books of different writers, and that each one was addressed to a different class of persons. St. Paul, in addressing the Galatians, was addressing a people who

were prone to rely on their works, to trust in what they did, thinking that by such external show they would be justified before God. The apostle endeavoured to eradicate this false impression from among them, hence the passage referred to. Now St. James saw that great faith was not the only requisite in the Christian, and fearing lest the religion of Christ should degenerate into a mere religion of belief without works, he impresses upon his readers that religion must be real, and that the good tree must bring forth good fruits.

Objection is taken to the narratives containing the account of the casting out of the devils by Christ, in the country of the Gergesenes. There is a certain disagreement in the narratives referred to; St. Matt. says, "There met him two possessed with devils," while St. Mark says, "There met him out of the tombs a man," and again, in St. Luke we read, "There met him out of the tombs a man." It is worthy of note, however, that neither Mark nor Luke state that there met him one man and no more. It might have been that one man, being much more furious, and therefore more notorious than the other, was considered to be especially worthy of notice by Matthew. The difference in the narratives proves that the apostles were not impostors, as in that case they would have taken care that no contra-

diction should be discovered. Had Matthew and Luke agreed to write books to deceive the world they would have agreed exactly in every particular. As it is they agree in the main points, and differ in unimportant matters. Luke tells us, that the man from whom Christ cast the devil, was "a man of the city;" it is probable then that he had been a wealthy and popular citizen, and the people would, under such circumstances, feel greater interest in his case. Mark and Luke therefore narrated his cure, and entirely omitted to mention the less notorious man.

If we read carefully the words of Solomon, and those of St. Paul to Timothy, relative to wine, we shall perceive that although the former speaks of wine as a drink which should not be used, while the latter plainly recommends its use, the passages are not irreconcilable. Solomon, saw around him, men who degraded themselves by indulgence of their appetites, to the neglect of higher things, and he vividly describes the miserable effect which drunkenness had upon them. He says in the 29th verse of the chapter above referred to, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?" and then follows the answer, "They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine." In the succeeding

verse he goes to the root of the evil ; his words paraphrased are these, Do not make wine your god, do not yield to the strong temptation to excessively indulge your appetite, for the result of so yielding is the wretched condition just described ; do not linger over the deceptive glass, until you lose reputation and self-control " At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Solomon appears then to warn against excess, rather than to prohibit the use of wine. St. Paul requests Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake ; he does not license its use to Timothy as a beverage, but only as a restorative in this particular case. We see then, that by duly considering the context of the passages under consideration, all difficulty respecting them quickly vanishes.

The expressions and narratives contained in Old Testament scriptures, to which the refined mind of the materialist takes offence as being favourable to immorality, are but few in number, and harmless in their character. Reference is nowhere made to this subject, except to state a fact, or to convey a useful lesson, and, although in a few cases the language conveying the idea is so plain and ungarnished as to be offensive to the most scrupulous, it will be found that the subject is generally treated of, discreetly and delicately. The plain recital of a fact is never likely to have

an injurious effect, especially when, as in these cases, an obvious lesson is derivable therefrom ; it is when the relation of incidents is couched in such language as is calculated to rouse the passions, and excite carnal desires, that harm results. This last is the literature which defiles the mind of the youth and maiden in our own day, although published and circulated with the avowed intent of suppressing vice. It may be remarked that in the early ages, when the Old Testament scriptures were written, civilization was much less advanced than it now is, and the sacred writers wrote in terms such as were customarily used at the time they lived. The objectors to the Bible on the ground of its immorality, represent it as teeming with lewd narratives, and exercising a very harmful influence upon the mind of the young and sensitive, but such a representation is entirely erroneous. In all cases in which the subject is in any way referred to, a good object is the underlying principle, and no harmful construction can be placed on any verse or chapter, unless handled with that ostensible object.



SECTION XIII.

The Materialist.—Another thing which must ever operate as a hindrance to the progress of Christianity, is the ill-feeling which is so frequently shown by the members of one religious sect towards those of another. Religion should soften the heart and beget a kindly feeling and concern towards all men, in whatever position in life, and under whatever circumstances. To fulfil its object it is necessary that Christianity should bring all men to one level before God, from whom they seek forgiveness; so influencing them as to cause them to regard sin with the strongest possible dislike, knowing it to be opposed to the will of their God, for whose honour and glory they profess to live. One of the principal objects of Christianity, respecting this life, is to bring about love and unity between men, and a universal desire to promote the happiness and well-being of the human race. We are unable, however, in the history of the world, to trace any such result from Christianity; we find, instead, that national

and individual quarrels have incessantly arisen from difference in religious opinions, productive of much bloodshed and sorrow and trouble of every description. In consequence of religious variance, very many have been subjected to the most excruciating pains, and finally burned, hung, drowned, or otherwise deprived of life, and this in the name of Christianity. Although in our own day such atrocious crimes are not perpetrated in our midst, private persecution is rife, and among the followers of Christ a feeling of enmity towards those whose views differ from their own is more the rule than the exception. Seeing that Christianity is productive of so much discord, instead of harmony, peace, and good-will, it is not surprising that its opponents are numerous.

The Christian, all over the world, has one great head, one example to guide him through life, and one written declaration of God's will as he believes it to be revealed to man. From this one would naturally infer that Christ's followers would be one united band of believers, working together to oppose sin, and to further the kingdom of God on earth. As a fact it is well known this is not the case. We find the Christian Church divided into numerous sections, each section being almost unexceptionally antagonistic to the other, each body of believers holding its

own views as to doctrine and form of worship, and considering such views to be correct, and those only. Scripture itself states that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and the great diversity of opinion and the decided antagonism which undoubtedly exists in the Christian Church is rather a sign of weakness than of stability.

The Christian.—That part of our national history and of the history of other nations which is descriptive of the bloodshed and persecution resulting from zeal for religion is of a very painful nature, and the bigotry and ill-feeling which is even now engendered in consequence of difference of religious persuasions is saddening in the extreme. Crimes, too, are not unfrequently perpetrated under the garb of religion, it being used as a cloak to hide faults and prevent suspicion. It would be extremely unjust, however, to impute the blame of wrongful proceedings thus carried out to religion.

It is by no means an unfrequent occurrence to discover that robberies have been committed by those who have been for a considerable time nominally Christians; men, too, who crave a high position in public or private life often resort to crafty means for furthering their interests, being at the same time faithful to their religion in external observances. Those of whom we find it

written that in their zeal for the Church they resorted to harsh measures even to the taking of life are numerous. Now, men who embrace Christianity with any such objects as are intended only to benefit themselves, or who subject their fellow men to pain and death, can be considered but nominally Christians; the tyrants who have striven to procure the death of their fellow men, because they differed from themselves in opinion, and those ill-disposed persons who in our own day tolerate none but those whose views, like their own, are prescribed within certain narrow limits, fall far short of what a Christian should be. Wicked men having used religion only as a cloak to hide their own sins, and keep their own ambitious designs from observation, does not prove that religion is a concoction of mythical ideas, calculated only to dispute the tranquility of our race; and the fact that many Christians fall so far short of the standard to which they should attain, as to feel embittered against all whose opinions do not coincide with their own, tends rather to prove the weakness of human nature than the fallacy of religion.

The division in the church above referred to is simply an external division, a division of the visible church on earth. In the church of Christ there is no division whatever, all trusting in the merits of one Saviour, and looking forward with

joyful anticipation to the fulfilment of the promises on which they rely. The splitting up of the visible church into various sects, does not prove that their belief is false, as in the main principles of their faith there is no material difference. They separate into various bodies, and call themselves by various names, simply because some prefer one form of worship to another, and because some differ from others on certain immaterial points. Some Christians hold that a consecrated building in which to worship God is essential, while others consider that the consecration by the bishop of an edifice, erected for celebrating the worship of God, in no degree increases its sanctity. Many believe that God forgives sin to the penitent soul through confession to the priest, but that if the confessor be not penitent his simple confession will be of no value. Others will not admit that sins should be confessed before the priest, but hold that forgiveness should be sought of God, in private only. These matters are but trifling, and scarcely merit deep consideration, much less should they be the cause of bitter enmity between man and man. During Christ's life on earth, and for many years prior to that time, it had been a matter of dispute among the Jews and Samaritans, as to whether or not Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship; when Christ was appealed to, by the

Samaritan woman, to decide the matter, he replied, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. . . . God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." By this he meant, that the true worship of the heart was what was needed, and that God was mindful only of the spirit and sincerity of worship, being indifferent as to the place in which the worship was offered. Just so it is with us; God desires that men should worship Him "in spirit and in truth," the form of worship and the place in which we worship him, being but a secondary and unimportant matter.

The form of worship is not the only cause of contention between men, as regards religion. There are many points, respecting which two or more theories may be held, and many parts of scripture, on which two or more constructions may be placed; *e.g.*, the words, "The wages of sin is death," and other passages, wherein the result of a sinful life is spoken of as "death," have been productive of much controversy, some believing the word "death" refers to a literal death, an annihilation, or a passing out of existence, while others construe it as meaning simply a loss of external happiness, and believe that the creature is not annihilated, but is con-

demned to everlasting misery. There are many passages in scripture, which have reference to matters over which we can have no control, and concerning which any doctrine must of necessity be purely speculative, hence lengthy discussions upon them have resulted in no definite conclusion.

Man is possessed of but a partial revelation, therefore much is left open, affording means for forming opposite opinions. No particular form of worship being required of the Christian, many sects are at the present time worshipping God, each in its own way, and holding opinions somewhat at variance one with the other, on matters, concerning which, nothing decisive is stated in the scriptures. But to conclude that on this account Christianity is a mere illusion, is decidedly absurd, for men's opinions differ on all things which are not of a nature to admit of a definite investigation. Although the science of medicine has been studied for many centuries, and has occupied the whole thought of many eminently clever men, those points are very numerous on which the foremost men in the medical profession differ in opinion even to this day; but although this is so, the number of persons who do not rely on medical men for aid, in times of need, forms but an unimportant few. Our great astronomers differ in the conclusions they arrive at, as to many objects which have received their attention. So

great is the diversity of opinion respecting meteors, that one who studies the various works in relation to them, must, of necessity, conclude that it is absolutely impossible to find a rational, and at the same time undisputed, explanation concerning them. From the difficulties attending every hypothesis yet proposed, it may be seen how little is certainly known respecting the nature of meteors. Many phenomena relating to them can be satisfactorily explained, but numerous points are, and probably ever will be, involved in mystery. Notwithstanding all the uncertainty which prevails among astronomers, as to some matters, all will admit that very much valuable knowledge is now within easy reach, through their extended exertions, and that their theories and discoveries are in the main true. The various theories held by electricians, concerning electricity, have been a prolific source of scientific controversy, yet none are prepared to deny that electricity exists, or to state, that because electricians so widely differ in their opinions, the science is unworthy of attention. The one theory is, that matter is pervaded with two distinct electric fluids, denominated respectively the vitreous, and the resinous, which attract each other, but repel themselves; another proposes that there is but one electric fluid, attracting matter, and repelling itself; a third is to the

effect that electricity is simply a molecular interchange between the particles of matter.

Such then are specimens of the diversity to be found among clever scientists, showing that respecting the same object, let that subject be what it may, widely different theories are held by our most eminent scientists. The world considers the scientist to be worthy of honour, and gladly welcomes his expositions, notwithstanding that contradiction has always been the result of discovery or study; it regards scientific men, as being one in their object, and one in their principal theories, although disagreeing on many points of a trivial nature. Christians are, like scientists, one in their object, and in their fundamental doctrines, although many unimportant questions are, from their ambiguous character, variously explained. Variance among Christians, respecting things of minor importance, must not be held to prove that religion is unreal, neither may it be resolved that Christianity should be entirely renounced, in consequence of many nominal Christians falling short of what they profess, for in such cases the fault rests with the individual, and not with Christianity.



SECTION XIV.

The Materialist.—Christians seek to establish a decided distinction between right and wrong, between good and evil, but a little reflection will decisively prove that this distinction is by no means so well defined and unquestionable as is commonly supposed. Lying is regarded as a sin; a lie can be told either in word or deed, and is generally defined as that which is said or done with an intent to deceive. The Christian holds that no deception is consistent with his life, and that his dealing should be open and straightforward with all. Although such is the avowed principle of the Christian, moderate observation will prove that deception is indulged in by every class of individuals, whether rich or poor, ignorant or learned, Christian or heathen; deception is, moreover, licensed by numerous instances recorded in scripture. Referring to the 7th chapter of the book of Judges, we find that Gideon, when about to attack the enemies of his country, provided each man of his band of three hundred, with a pitcher, in which was concealed a lighted lamp.

After having surrounded the enemy's camp at night, he gave the signal for the pitchers to be broken, whereby the lights were exposed. This stratagem was resorted to in order to lead the foe to believe that they were encompassed by a multitude of well armed men. The time chosen for making the attack being night, it can easily be understood that a band of three hundred men, divided into three companies, and stationed round about the camp, suddenly breaking a pitcher, exhibiting a light, and shouting, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," would deceive the enemy, and lead them to suppose that a tremendous multitude encompassed the camp. The plan was completely successful, the consternation being so great in the camp of the enemy, that an easy victory was obtained by Gideon and his small band. This deceitful scheme met with God's approval.

In 2 Samuel, xii, 1-4, we read that the prophet, Nathan, was sent by God to David, to inform him of God's displeasure, in consequence of his having caused the death of Uriah the Hittite. In order to bring his sin sensibly before the mind of the king, the prophet represented to him that a certain poor man had been deprived of his lamb, the only one possessed by him, by a rich man, for the purpose of entertaining a visitor, the rich man himself being possessed of much cattle, and

not until the king had pronounced sentence of death on the cruel rich man, did the prophet inform him that he was the man referred to. In each of these cases a servant of God is represented as practising deceit in the fulfilment of God's work.

In our early life, we cannot fail to observe that this deception, this mode of lying by deed, is everywhere to be found. What person, when doubtful of his safety, would scruple to represent to those of whom he entertained fear that he had protection at hand, although he had none ? How many ministers of the gospel read the sermons of others, intending that their auditors shall accept them as their own productions ? Would not the unselfish person state that he or she did not require that which another desired, although it was, in fact, otherwise ? It appears that lying, by word or deed, is indulged in now, and has been in the past, when requisite to bring about a desired result ; and if, in such cases as have been mentioned, it is not in opposition to God's will, but receives his sanction, it must be acknowledged that lying is a nonentity, and that freedom is accorded to all, to speak or act as may be most suitable to attain the desired object.

That man is an animal, whether possessed of a soul or not, all will admit. As an animal, his body is subject to instinctive passions ; just as

hunger requires to be appeased, so the other requirements of the physical organism must be complied with; and although, by satisfying those requirements, the rules of morality may be broken, it does not appear that the person who satisfies the craving of nature in this respect, is less innocent of crime than he who appeases his hunger and thirst. In this case, the distinction between right and wrong is not simply extremely vague, but absolutely undiscernible, and that which is usually considered to be sinful, cannot reasonably be so regarded.

One of the observances which religion requires to be duly performed, is the preservation of the sanctity of the sabbath. On this day, the 4th commandment enacts, no work may be done of any kind whatsoever. "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. In it thou shalt do no manner of work." The Christian, nevertheless, argues that certain kinds of work may be done, as works of charity, or necessity; and, indeed, an exact compliance with the commandment would be impossible. Now, if works of necessity may be lawfully done on the sabbath day, it simply brings the matter to this: a man may do all that is, in his opinion, necessary on the sabbath day, just as on any other, and as no man does what he considers to be unnecessary on any day, the sabbath and the week day are not distinct by any

moral law, but only so far as each person may deem expedient to best suit his own circumstances.

The foregoing remarks will suffice to prove that the old notion respecting good and evil is entirely erroneous. It was, and is even now, held by many, that a clearly defined margin separates the good from the evil, the proper from the improper, and the holy from the unholy; and that he who trespasses from the one side to the other is guilty of sin. He who gives the subject serious attention, will perceive that no such unmistakeable and definite distinction can be traced, and that the one merges into the other almost imperceptibly, just as the dawn brightens into daylight. The whole human race is struggling for a subsistence, and some are much more happily circumstanced than others. The man who is possessed of sufficient material substance to provide him with necessities and luxuries, both for the present and the future, can deal fairly with his neighbour, taking no more than is his due, and satisfying all just claims against him, and can preserve his reputation as an honest man. His neighbour possibly has not bread to satisfy his craving appetite, or to save his starving family from death, and, seeing a convenient opportunity, he seizes, and appropriates to his own uses, that which belongs to another, not to enrich himself, or deprive his fellow man of comfort, but to still the wailing of his darlings,

and the gnawing of his stomach. The first mentioned person may be a glutton, and a drunkard, with no sympathy for a brother in distress, and no love for his offspring, and possibly, if placed in a trying position, would need no inducement to wrong his neighbour, in order to satisfy his own requirements. The destitute man may have become so, through the happening of events over which he had no control; the abject poverty of his dear ones, and their wan faces, and occasional exclamations of suffering, prey so strongly upon him, that his sympathetic and loving nature will no longer permit of his resisting temptation, and he steals to preserve his own life, and that of his dear ones. If the former is held blameless, and respected as an honest man, while the latter is regarded as a thief, and an outcast, how can it be held that justice is done to them? We see that it is quite possible that a thief may be an honest and honourable man, while the straightforward and honoured man may be a thief, and altogether disreputable. The peculiar surroundings of an individual determine his character, and man does not act on principle, but as necessity requires him.

If right and wrong, good and evil, are positively distinct, the question is, of what does right consist, and what constitutes wrong. If righteousness be held to consist of an innate principle to wrong no

man, and to act and speak straightforwardly, and uprightly, then it becomes at once apparent that it is practically non-existent, as in that case, the righteous man acts righteously, simply because it is natural for him to do so, and it would be unreasonable to expect that he would act otherwise. If we consider man to be a responsible creature, prone to evil, and restrained from it only by the fear of incurring Almighty God's displeasure, then the righteous man is righteous simply for gain, and such a religion as this is most decidedly repulsive. Each person holds a philosophy of his own respecting right and wrong; what one considers to be a gross sin, another believes to be an innocent proceeding, and while one class of Christians is of opinion that that only is sin which so appears to the mind of the party committing the act, another class holds that evil undoubtedly exists, and should be refrained from, and that he who sins unwittingly is as deserving of punishment, as he who sins in full consciousness of his wrongful act.

With such conflicting opinions prevailing, among the various Christian sects, how is it possible to conclude definitely, what is morally lawful. So widely different are the views held, and so nearly does the good approach the nominally evil, that liberty is given to boldly assert that man is a free agent, and that right and wrong do but circum-

stantially exist, and cannot be considered as definitely distinct the one from the other.

The Christian.—The charge of deception made against Christians, is, unfortunately, in the main, true. Deception is indulged in by every class of people. This fact indicates that man is frail, and should convince him how futile are his endeavours to act as he would wish, his spirit being willing but the flesh weak. It is not allowed that religion conforms to, or sanctions wanton deceit—such an admittance would deprive it of its vital force. The Bible, setting forth the basis of the Christian's belief, and his hope for the future, is usually attacked by the anti-Christian, at any point where a shadow of weakness or inconsistency can be traced, and we will therefore first remove the doubt which may attach to the strict propriety of the proceedings above referred to. The view taken of the means by which the Israelites gained a complete victory, over the Midianites and Amalekites, is, that it was a highly deceptive scheme, meeting with God's approbation, although opposed to the general principles of Christianity. Why such a construction should be placed upon the narrative, it is hard to say. By carefully perusing the chapters relating to this victory, it will be seen that there is no ground whatever for presuming that the men of Gideon's

band were provided with lamps and trumpets, in order to represent to their enemies that they were surrounded by a vast host. The Midianites and Amalekites were races who had, by their extreme wickedness, and unmitigated cruelty, incurred God's displeasure, and this was the time chosen by him to inflict punishment upon them. Gideon's little band was but a handful of men, when compared with the vast host which lay "like grasshoppers for multitude" before them, and the sudden exhibition of any number of lamps, and the blowing of any number of trumpets, by the tiny company of three hundred men, would have been totally ineffectual in discomfiting the enemy, had not a supernatural influence been brought to bear upon them. We see that God's object in delivering his people in the way he did, was to convince them that they were dependent on him, and that he could, by invisible means, so fill their enemies with consternation, that they should destroy one another. Had not this been his intention, he would not have ordered that Gideon's army of thirty-two thousand men, should be reduced to three hundred, for the presumed stratagem could have been better practised with the former number. Throughout the narrative it is impossible to discover any sign of a pre-arranged strategy, while the evidence that God was desirous of displaying his power before his people, to

increase their trust in him, is abundant. In *Judes vii, 2*, we read, "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me, to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."

Respecting the prophet Nathan, and his visit, at the command of God, to King David, it needs simply to be said, that the method adopted by the prophet, for conveying vividly to the mind of the king, the depth of the crime he had committed, was by allegorically representing to him his own sin. In such a proceeding not a shadow of deception appears, his relation of the supposed rich man's selfishness and crime being but an illustration of the king's own conduct.

The excuse for sin sought by comparing the amative propensity, with the other natural propensities to which the physical man is subject, occurs to the mind of even the most illiterate, and is consequently argued by many thousands in favour of immoral indulgence. It is necessary that we should judge of the propriety or impropriety of acts chiefly by their good or bad results, and by our moral feelings, in such matters as that now under consideration. It is possible to indulge the alimentive propensity more than is justifiable, but excess in this direction is productive of less disgusting consequences, than in those cases where

the laws of morality are violated. Who has walked the streets of our large cities, and failed to notice the revolting consequences of what our sensual opponents please to consider to be a due regard for the instincts of nature. The misery caused by sensual indulgence, the lives wasted, the youthful hopes blasted, the compulsory recourse to dishonesty, the broken hearts of many a tender mother, and the gradual undermining of the originally vigorous constitution, are results of such inestimable magnitude, tainting the whole of our social organisation, that every right-minded person, if on no ground but to advance the temporal happiness of the general community, feels impelled to make a strenuous effort to suppress the vice, so degrading in its nature, yet so rapidly increasing throughout our country. What would our condition be, in the event of a general collapse of the majority of our countrymen into the paths of immorality, held up by many to be both pleasant and innocent? The whole constitution of our country would be speedily undermined and our system would be subjected to such a severe shock, that the moral and intellectual world would be grievously disorganised. Is it hard to discern between right and wrong in this case? Surely the ignorant and thoughtless can perceive, if they will, that sensuality is a sure road to ruin, and productive of the most extreme misery.

With regard to the sabbath day, which it has been ordained should be observed as a general rest, it is pleasing to see that much has been done and is still doing, to curtail human labour on the sabbath, but it is to be regretted that many of our too earnest, and enthusiastic brethren, by the expression of extreme views, expose themselves to ridicule, and incite their opponents to action. It was originally ordained that man should, on one day in every week, lay aside his ordinary business, agricultural, or other pursuits, and enjoy a day of rest, giving him an opportunity to assemble with his friends in the house of God, to enjoy domestic associations, and to invigorate the body for the work before him, requiring the exertion of his mental or physical energy, during the ensuing week. Many have carried this duty of hallowing the sabbath to an improper length, and have abstained from the performance of domestic duties, thinking that by so doing they were fulfilling the law of God. It is impossible, however, to comply with the 4th commandment in its literal sense, and it is, indeed, quite unnecessary to endeavour to do so. The scriptures must be considered as a whole, and accepted as a general guide for man; too much importance must not be attached to isolated passages, in their literal signification. Religion should be more of the spirit, and less importance should be attached to

the exact compliance with certain laws and ordinances. These statements are not made on the strength of the writer's own imagination, but as endorsing Christ's teaching, and the convictions of the thoughtful Christian. In St. Mark's gospel, ch. ii, 23—28, we read, that the disciples of our Lord were accused, by the Jews, of breaking the sabbath, by plucking the ears of corn, in passing through the corn-fields, and that Christ vindicated their actions. He first referred their accusers back to the days of King David, and reminded them that the king, being in want, did not scruple to depart from the strict letter of the law, and ate the shewbread, which it was lawful for no man to eat save the priests. He then explained to them their error, in a few plain words ; "The sabbath," said he, "was made for man, and not man for the sabbath ;" that is, the sabbath was intended for the welfare of man, and to promote his happiness, and not to produce misery, by harsh invariable requirements. Man was created first, and then the sabbath ; man's necessities are not to bend to that which was made for him, but the law must be interpreted favourably to his wants and comforts. An able commentator remarks, with reference to this subject : "The sabbath was made for man's rest from toil, his rest from the cares and anxieties of the world, to give an opportunity to call off his attention from

earthly concerns, and to direct it to the affairs of eternity. It was a kind provision for man, that he might refresh his body, by relaxing his labours ; that he might have undisturbed time to seek the consolations of religion, to cheer him in the anxieties and sorrows of a troubled world ; and that he might render to God that homage which is most justly due to him, as the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer of the world. And it is easily capable of proof, that no institution has been more signally blessed to man's welfare than the Christian sabbath. To that we owe, more than to anything else, the peace and order of a civilized community. Where there is no sabbath, there is ignorance, vice, disorder, and crime. . . . The sabbath was therefore pre-eminently intended for man's welfare, and the best interests of mankind demand that it should be sacredly regarded, as an appointment of merciful heaven, intended for our best good, and where improved aright, infallibly resulting in our temporal and eternal peace. Man was made first, and then the sabbath was appointed for his welfare Gen. ii, 2 and 3. The sabbath was not first made, or contemplated, and then the man made with reference to that. Since therefore the sabbath was intended for man's real good, the law respecting it must not be interpreted so as to oppose his real welfare. It must be interpreted in consistency with a proper

attention to the claims of mercy to the poor, and the sick, and those in peril. It must be, however, in accordance with man's real good on the whole, and we have no right, under the plea that the sabbath was made for man, to do anything contrary to what the law of God admits. It would not be for our real good, but for our real and eternal injury, to devote the sabbath to vice, to labour, or to amusement."

The observance of the sabbath, and strict compliance with other laws, is regulated by circumstances, and a strongly marked boundary cannot be fixed, over which no man may step. Whatever can be done to advance the happiness of our fellow men, or whatever is necessary for our well-being should not be neglected. Christians make no pretence at being literal followers of the law, as the Bible itself teaches, that the general interests of man may not be disregarded for that purpose, and therefore, Christianity should not be condemned in consequence of man's failure to fulfil every jot and tittle of the Biblical *lex scripta*.

It has been urged, that because good and evil cannot at all times be readily distinguished, therefore they are identical the one with the other. It might as reasonably be argued, because the bright daylight gradually declines to twilight and twilight deepens into darkness so imperceptibly that no precise time can be fixed, dividing the light from the

darkness, that therefore daylight and darkness are identical. Man is provided with a safeguard against sin, in the still small voice which speaks within him, that gentle admonisher, which we call conscience. It is possible, however, for him to continue indifferent to inquiry into what is right, and what is wrong, and to disregard the still small voice for so long a time, that he at last becomes almost unconscious of sin. Thus it is not uncommon for intellectual, and generally well-informed persons, to so frequently communicate a falsehood, without making the tongue guilty of an untruth, that they eventually indulge in the habit, regarding it as perfectly right and just.

We have not to deal, just now, with the hardened sinner, and we will therefore consider man, prior to his becoming so degraded and sunken in vice, that he is unable to discern between good and evil. Man is, by nature, conscious of sin, and it is not unfrequently that a sin, committed and kept from human observation during many long years, so preys upon the mind, as to entirely deprive it of rest. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there lived a nobleman, Lord Essex, who received at the Queen's hands, a ring, given by her to him, from the high esteem in which she held him. This ring, the Queen assured Lord Essex, would, if sent to her by him, when under her severest displeasure, procure his

pardon. Some time afterwards, Lord Essex was sentenced to be beheaded in consequence of his having raised a dangerous tumult against the Queen, and in the hope of obtaining pardon, he sent the ring to Lady Scrope, to be delivered to the Queen. The Countess of Nottingham, sister to Lady Scrope, from the bitter hatred she had towards Lord Essex, wickedly retained the ring in her possession, and the doomed man was therefore beheaded, the Queen signing the death warrant, in the full belief that Lord Essex scorned her pardon. The Countess, when on her deathbed, sent a message to the Queen, that she could not die until she had made a confession to her ; the Queen visited the dying woman, who then confessed her guilt, and besought pardon for her offence. Very numerous are the cases of this kind, where sins having been long since committed, and carefully concealed so as to elude human observation, have so disturbed the mind of the sinner, that anything can be endured, even though it be death itself, in preference to the insufferable torments of conscience. Of this fact we have proof in the many instances where undiscovered criminals have eventually delivered themselves up to justice.

If right and wrong do but nominally exist, why is it that man feels a concern respecting them ? Man, only, is troubled by the question of justice

or injustice ; the lower animals are intent only on satisfying their requirements. Has God in this thing only, implanted within us an inward feeling, with no sphere for its exercise ? This would be against the rule of nature ; we are gifted with a sense of sight, and have colour, light, and objects to gratify it ; we have a sense of taste, and flavours for its indulgence ; we are possessed of a faculty for hearing, and sounds exist. Can we then reasonably conclude, that the faculty enabling us to distinguish good from evil has not its external correspondent ?

To believe that the virtuous are virtuous, and that the vicious are vicious, from the dispensations of nature, we must consider that praise and blame, rewards and punishments, are strictly and simply nominal. Our nature, however, renders this inadmissible, such a doctrine being inconsistent with reason, and repugnant to our moral feelings.

The materialist asks, "Of what does right consist, and what constitutes wrong ?" Right consists in conforming our life to God's will, as revealed in scripture, and to our moral feelings, and may be concisely expressed, as doing our duty towards God, and towards our neighbour. Acting in opposition to God's will, and wilfully disregarding the general good of mankind, constitutes wrong. These definitions, of course, refer to the

external, of which only man can judge; the rest we leave in the hands of the great Searcher of Hearts, whose piercing eye can read the thoughts, as well as see the actions, and he it is only who can determine, whether the actions of any man are the outcome of a pure motive.

A system of philosophy now extant, seeks to establish, that weak or strong moral sentiments, are born with every individual, and that therefore, man is invariably what we see him by nature, and is not responsible for his actions. This theory holds, that every man has a philosophy of his own formed from his own natural reasoning capacity, and that he advocates whatever coincides with his views, and condemns all beside his particular theory. This is in part true; none can deny that each man differs from the other by nature, for in children, similarly trained, and born of the same parents, much difference in their intellectual powers, and in their inborn character, is frequently noticed. Reason may be defined as, inferring from premises, and a man's capacity to reason, will therefore be determined in a great measure by his store of knowledge, which is of necessity partially regulated by his intellectual ability. From this the philosopher infers, that a man forms his opinions of right and wrong, in accordance with the amount of know-

ledge and ability possessed by him. Happily, however, to decide that question, a logician is not more capable than the ordinary man. To concoct many of the materialistic, and atheistical theories, which are presented to us, a very considerable amount of logical training is necessary, and an uninformed person would be unable to conceive them; but to determine between good and evil, is easy even to the illiterate. The most ignorant can easily understand, that the one is as distinct from the other, as any two material substances. Imagine a kingdom, in which to man is accorded perfect freedom, to act exactly as he is prompted by his instinctive passions, and propensities, and suppose that his higher moral nature is entirely eradicated, and that he acts in obedience to his animal nature, with no sense of justice, love, or godliness. Would such a kingdom stand on a level with that in which virtue is upheld, and crime is punished? On the contrary, under such circumstances man's life would be an intolerable burden.

There is in man, undoubtedly, an innate principle to act righteously, and there is also a tendency to sin. Our faculties and propensities, are subject to the will, and we can either encourage virtue and holiness in ourselves, or we can, by wilful neglect of the higher sentiments of our nature, cause them to dwindle into insigni-

ficance, when our animal propensities will naturally gain the supremacy. Man was created, sufficient to stand, though free to fall. This view is not opposed to the indisputable inferences to be drawn from the science of phrenology, for although man is talented in various degrees, all sane persons may so develop their intellectual faculties, and moral sentiments, as to cause the weakest, to ultimately become the strongest.

A decided and unalterable law cannot be laid down, to determine in all possible circumstances in which man may be placed, what is evil. The decision must, in the majority of instances, be dependent on the peculiar circumstances attending the case, and our own convictions, assisted by God's word, seldom fail to guide us aright, in all matters of practical importance.



CONCLUSION.

In the preceding pages, all the principal objections to Christianity have been cited, and considered with all fairness, and, after inquiring into the objections referred to, we see that no such tremendous obstacles beset the path of the Christian, as is often supposed. Difficulties indeed there are, and on several points we feel that we should be glad to possess more definite knowledge, but the difficulties with which the Christian has to contend, are few and unimportant, when compared with the insurmountable obstacles attending the theory of the materialist or the atheist. It would be a gross error to suppose, because Christianity is not divested of every possible difficulty, that therefore the difficulty is insurmountable; the actual should never be taken for the possible. It is true of every theory, that many objections to it may be raised; and even if the materialist or the atheist could offer to us a theory, to which no objection could be taken, it must be remembered that to establish the truth beyond a doubt, it is insufficient to trace one argument to its source, observing its strength and weakness; all the arguments on both sides having been thoroughly

examined, and carefully considered, must be balanced one against the other, and not until this has been done, can a reliable opinion be formed.

As various references have been made to the Bible as a book, the authenticity of which is beyond doubt, it is deemed advisable to make a few further remarks as to the same, and to further consider the basis of our faith, in order that it may not be said of us, that we believe in religion, and in the Bible, simply because our fathers taught us scripture, and our mothers made us say our prayers, for if this were so, the Hottentot would have as much ground for his faith as we have. The young man who is educated to believe the Bible, would generally be satisfied as to its truth, but objections are continually urged against it, and it therefore behoves us to be familiar with the external evidence of the authenticity of the sacred volume, so that we may never be at a loss for a clear proof of the integrity of the scriptures, in the event of the principles of our faith being attacked.

The Old Testament was a well known book at the time of Christ, and was confirmed by him in every possible way, quotations from it being frequently made by him, to illustrate his own meaning, and to confirm his sayings. This being so, we have but to prove the truth of the New Testament. It is not intended to reconcile all the numerous passages which appear to be somewhat

contradictory, for so extensive an undertaking would be to write a commentary on the Bible. Our object is, simply, to ascertain whether the doctrines, on which the Christian belief is founded, have any external evidence to support them. Men have doubted whether Christ and his disciples ever lived, but such doubts have been speedily removed by the testimony of all historians, both Christian and heathen, who not only testify of their actual life, but of their influence over the people among whom they moved. As no doubt can be entertained respecting Christ's actual life on earth, we are led to believe that the books which describe his life, miracles, character, and death, are worthy of our serious attention. The authors of those books were, almost without exception, plain honest men, who act simply as witnesses to what they saw and heard; they do not indulge in elaborate opinions as to their personal view of Christ's teaching and character, but they simply record the facts, with a native simplicity, clearly proving that they were not possessed of learning or ability, to invent such a character as Christ. Would it be a reasonable supposition that ordinary fishermen, without intellectual culture or training, could have presented to the world, a man, such as is represented in the person of Christ; could they have invented a character, such as has commanded the attention of man, during the past two thousand years.

In many parts of the scriptures, it is plainly apparent that the ordinary motives to imposition are wanting; the gospels consist, almost exclusively, of an ungarnished narration of the facts relating to the actual life and experiences of Christ. If it still be argued that the books of the New Testament are an imposition, how can it be explained that such books, although written and circulated among a keen generation, which would not admit even an exaggerated statement, although opposed to the truths recorded, were unable to detect any inaccuracy, notwithstanding the fact that names, places, and dates, are scattered profusely throughout the gospels. It is certain that so numerous and influential as were the enemies of Christ and his disciples, that if it had been possible the new gospel would have been crushed in the bud. It cannot be denied that the principal facts, on the reality of which everything in the Christian faith rests, are true and this being proved, the incidental questions which may be raised, may be treated as of secondary importance. The Bible can make the high claim that its religion is a religion of facts, and young men will do well by refusing to become confused by inquiries which are not of vital importance, and which tend only to weaken their faith in religion, and serve no useful purpose.

As the truth of the Bible cannot be denied, the fact that Christ was a supernatural person, must

also be admitted. To prove this, we have but to peruse the accounts of the wonderful works of our Lord, which are recorded in the gospels, and the astounding effects produced by but a word from his lips, will sufficiently confirm the fact that he was divine. Even the anti-Christian believes that these works were performed, and endeavours to explain them as being the result of magnetic or other influence. It was no magnetic influence, however, which could cause the dead, after having lain in the grave four days, to rise to life, and nothing short of a superhuman, and supernatural power, could, in an instant, calm the raging sea. Although the miracles of Christ are very significant, and go a long way towards establishing the fact that Christ came into the world possessed of, and exercising divine power, less proof of his coming as an actual Saviour is afforded by them, than by his personal character. It is comparatively easy for the world to prove, in a manner satisfactory to itself, that the Lord Jesus courted men to false beliefs by skilful deception, but to imagine a natural man, such as we behold in the Son of God, is absolutely impossible. He was born of poor parents, and trained in a lowly manner; he was unaided by any temporal power, in his wondrous career: he performed works at which the whole world was astonished, and he uttered words which confounded the most skilful and learned among his

enemies ; he differed from all who lived in his day, and was perfect in his purity, and sublime in his maxims. He conformed his life to all circumstances, his one aim being to do the will of his Heavenly Father, and to promote the welfare of mankind. He could argue with the profoundest philosophers, and, by a few mild reproofs, overthrow their arguments ; he could sympathise with the widowed mother, and could rejoice at the marriage feast ; he did not scorn to sit down to meat with the publican, and was the friend of the harlot, and the sinner, influencing all by the marvellous wisdom by which he showed each man his error, and incited him to a life of purity and holiness, and finally died a death of ignominy and shame, praying for his murderers.

The facts respecting Christ's life, his miracles, his sayings, and his death, are undisputable ; now if man is not immortal, why did Christ visit this world in human form, and die the death of a thief or a murderer ? The only answer to be given to this question is, that he came to save fallen sinners, and to set before them an example in his life, worthy of universal imitation. His was a life of singular purity and holiness ; his precepts were so mild, and yet so deep in their meaning, that whenever followed, a most beneficial influence is exercised on the whole life and character. He was none other than the Son of God and the Saviour of our fallen race, and his

coming into the world, and dying for sinful man, is alone sufficient evidence of man's immortality.

Although much may be said in favour of religion from point of fact, and wholesome argument, its principal recommendation is in its practical value. It is a prop whereon to lean in all seasons of trouble, and adversity, and a stay, which cannot be adequately valued. The benign influences exercised by it, cannot be depicted in language, but he who tries and proves it, becomes speedily satisfied, that that from which so intense a gratification is derived, can be no idle imagination, or aggregation of fanciful notions, but that it is a solid and living reality. From worldliness, a poor and shortlived gratification is derived, and from an honourable profession or calling, the benefits at most are of an uncertain nature, and duration, but religion never fails in affording true and lasting consolation. The worldly man when his earthly course is finished, has no hope, no support ; he lays himself down to die, and reflects on a life spent, and pleasures indulged in, which have all passed, and his riches, the result of arduous and energetic undertakings, mock him, as he remembers that they are now worthless to him, and that all his exertions have proved useless in giving one moment's peace or comfort, in the most awful moments of his life. Peace is not his, but pain at the recollection of duties neglected ; and selfish motives which have caused him to disregard

the poor and destitute, now inflict upon him mental agony, a thousand times more excruciating than his most terrible bodily sufferings. It behoves all to delay no longer, but to make this important matter a personal consideration. Let us be no longer deluded by having regard only for the things pertaining to our mortal bodies; let us cultivate our higher nature, our moral sentiments, which do not end with this short life. The sentiment of benevolence, by which we love our neighbour as ourselves, and do unto others as we would have them do unto us, and that sense of awe and reverence by which we are led to glorify our Maker in all his grand and terrible works, these make up the immortal part of man, the truth of which none so well know as he, who is for ever leaving this world of deception. All natural passions appear, at the time of death, in their true character, as illusions, and but fill the mind with unspeakable remorse, while the remembrance of faithful and true worship of our God, and of an honest discharge of our duty to society, are sources of solid comfort. Who, I ask, in the face of such incontestable proofs of the value of Christianity, can dare to assert that man is but a superior animal, endowed with no life, other than that which is common to all animated beings?

THE END.



